The Politics of Cohesion in France, Germany and the United Kingdom

Jan Dobbernack

Department of International Politics

Aberystwyth University

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Abstract / Summary

Over the last two decades, social cohesion has become a widespread political concern. Governments across Western Europe consider how social cohesion may be at risk and propose political initiatives to safeguard cohesion. This objective is usually seen to require the active contribution of citizens who are called upon to evince responsibility for social unity. Cohesion agendas have been developed with the intention to instil this responsibility through measures of social activation. The proximity between cohesion and activation, however, has rarely been explored. While their mutual dependence tends to be considered as a given or a natural fact, this thesis seeks to show how the two orientations have been conjoined as a result of changing conceptualizations of society in political debate. In studies of such debates and of agenda-setting moments, the thesis examines the development of new concerns, concepts and political measures in France, Germany and the United Kingdom.

Cohésion sociale was introduced in the context of ambiguous definitions of social exclusion that had emerged in French political discourse since the early 1980s. It was developed as a political objective that would respond to Jacques Chirac's diagnosis of *fracture sociale*. *Bürgergesellschaft* in Germany was defined against the background of anxiety about collective immobility, social sclerosis and political apathy. In the early 2000s, it proved to be a vehicle for a turn towards activation in welfare state reform. In Britain, *community cohesion* was introduced in response to a spate of unrest in the English North. In its most prominent conceptualisations, it responded to the diagnosis that these and other social problems were the result of misguided multicultural objectives and behavioural deficiencies among ethnic minority populations.

The thesis treats the formation of these agendas as a challenge that requires both interpretation and critique. It proposes a perspective on how society is imagined in the course of the formation of social cohesion agendas. It suggests that in particular the imaginary coincidence of disintegration and unity is characteristic of this social imaginary and provides for a sense of urgency that frequently underpins remedies of activation. The thesis concludes that where cohesion is said to be lacking, populations are selectively targeted and ethnic minority groups, welfare recipients, or the unemployed are being subjected to new demands. The critical concern of the thesis is to explore how new concerns with social unity have led to the adoption of requirements that are placed on the doorstep of those that are less able to comply.

Declaration / Statements

Declaration

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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Statement 1

This thesis is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated. Correction services have not been used. Sources are acknowledged by explicit references in the text. A bibliography is appended.

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I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and inter-library loan, and for the summary to be made available to outside organisations.

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I dedicate this thesis to Marlies and Klaus.

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Introduction

Social cohesion has become an issue across political arenas. It ranks highly among concerns with crime, anti-social behaviour and street violence; racism, ethnic segregation, so-called ethnic enclaves, parallel societies and parallel lives; increasing numbers of welfare recipients and an ossified welfare state; decreasing turnouts at elections and increasing apathy towards social and political affairs. The suggestion is either that social problems such as these are caused by a lack of cohesion or that their presence puts cohesion at risk. Despite ambiguity, the political objective of cohesion seems to offer the semblance of a blueprint for the remedy of social problems. Political strategies, measures and instruments that are seen to generate cohesion, to allow for its preservation, or to ward off its decline, have been conceived across socio-economic, civic and cultural domains of concern. What seems to unite these strategies is maybe not the nature of their concern or the measures they envisage but, as Ash Amin (2005, 614) suggests, a similarity in how they understand the remedial effects of cohesion: it is conceived as a "regenerative tonic" that can be infused in order to avert social problems, improve social relations and the quality of society as a whole.

More than a matter of how to perceive society, social cohesion usually comes with the claim for the adoption of particular measures to establish conditions of cohesiveness or to remedy the causes of their deterioration. The reference to cohesion is accompanied by the request that such conditions need to be established through the active contribution of populations towards this task. This commonality indicates that cohesion is not just a perspective that has become fashionable or a term that is newly pervasive. It is a concept with a corresponding political project.

The presence of political interest in the conditions of social unity may not seem surprising. A concern for order is long established in political thought. With Thomas Hobbes, it has been a starting point for early-modern conceptions of statecraft. Moreover, social integration tends to rank highly among governmental priorities ever since in the 19th century society began to be conceived as an object that requires stabilizing interventions (Donzelot 1994; Castel 1995). In its contextual manifestations, for its particular perspectives on society, and as a political project, however, the new interest in cohesion requires examination. Political uses of cohesion should be scrutinized for their conceptions and normative understandings of society, for their

accounts of social disintegration and of the cohesive society, and for the measures that they envisage for averting disintegration and for achieving social unity. Given its recent pervasiveness in European political discourse, the new turn to cohesion needs to be of interest for its politics.

The politics of cohesion that is examined in this study is formulated in response to the perception that the failure of social, economic and political arrangements puts social unity at risk and bears out a number of newly urgent social problems. Although this failure is consistently invoked, its nature and the causes of alleged crises of cohesion are usually less than clear and – as demonstrated in this thesis – vary across national contexts where cohesion has become a concern. However, problems that are identified as a result of such failures are often said to require new efforts of political counter-balancing, social regulation and governance. In its most common understandings, social cohesion has to be addressed by new methods of political intervention and a new sense of individual responsibility.

Social theorists have expanded on the development of such political objectives. In his writings on the Third Way, Anthony Giddens (1998, 37) has given the politics of cohesion an influential expression.

> Social cohesion can't be guaranteed by the top-down action of the state or by appeal to tradition. We have to make our lives in a more active way than was true of previous generations, and we need more actively to accept responsibilities for the consequences of what we do and the lifestyle habits we adopt.

He sees a "need to re-establish continuity and develop social cohesion in a world of erratic transformation" (1998, 67). The resulting political imperative for a "new-style social democracy" is to foster "an active civil society" (1998, 78). Other public intellectuals associated with centre-left reformism have put forward parallel suggestions, though they are usually more careful than Giddens to maintain a position of critical distance towards the politics they describe. In *La nouvelle question sociale*, Pierre Rosanvallon (1995) speaks of the need to reconsider 'social rights' and to move towards a new focus on obligations, understood as "a moment of the reconstruction of the social" (ibid, 181). Rosanvallon (ibid, 222) suggests "[t]he classic opposition between individual and collective is no longer workable. We can no longer separate the reform of mentalities and that of structures, of individual moralities and political

imperatives". Earlier, Ulrich Beck's (1986) work on the *Risikogesellschaft* postulated the inadequacy of risk management by means of conventional practices of social solidarity. In a new world of uncertainty, individuals allegedly have to meet the proliferation of risks with an adaptation of their *Biographiemuster* (biographical template), which would need to aspire to new degrees of flexibility and activity (1986, 205).[1]

Despite considerable differences, these accounts share the understanding that social change can only be successfully achieved and potentially catastrophic scenarios of social collapse avoided, if individual orientations catch up and respond to new imperatives with a measure of heightened activity and a new sense of responsibility. Social cohesion, the Council of Europe (2004, 8) concurs, is a "responsibility shared by all". To meet this responsibility, new dispositions, character traits and value orientations in the pursuit of individual and collective activity are said to be required. The fostering of such dispositions has become a key political concern.

Regardless of whether one conceives of the politics of cohesion following Giddens' theorisation or cognate expressions in social theory, it is conspicuous how social unity and individual activity have been brought together over the last two decades. As a counter-balance to problems that arise when cohesion is either insufficient or absent, ideas of social activity, activation and mobility have been introduced across European states. Activity, in various shapes, has become a strategic remedy where social cohesion is seen to be defective. Thus, when this investigation suggests that cohesion is accompanied by a *politics,* it points to the coincidence of cohesion and activation. Cohesion is usually accompanied by requests for populations to evince activity, mobility and responsibility. Consequently, this study is not merely interested in the new pervasiveness of a concern but in how and why cohesion seems to require measures that activate and mobilize populations.

1 Ruth Levitas (2000, 204) points to a flaw in 'risk society' thinking, namely that "one cannot define a society in terms of its discursive strategies for dealing with the negative consequences of its material practices". See also Johansson (2007) and Castel (2003) for critical remarks on how there is a slippage from analysis and description towards endorsement in Beck's writings and, more generally, a problem with how 'risk' is complicit in shifting the burden from structural inequality towards individual behaviour.

Perspectives on cohesion

The spread of cohesion across European public policy is conspicuous. Non-state actors, pressure groups, think tanks and research institutes alike have picked up the notion. A lack of cohesion has become a popular explanation for crises and problems and a starting point for various kinds of public policy activity. Arguably, over the last three decades there has been an unfolding of such concerns to an extent that might make it appropriate to conceive of the emergence of cohesion as a juncture or watershed moment, when previously unarticulated concerns with social disunity, disintegration, and social decline began to underpin a new interest in unity and social integration. How and when exactly this occurred, and what has been the driving force of this kind of historical shift, appears rather unclear. It may be a concern for the kind of "epochal analyses" that, as Raymond Williams (1991, 413) puts it, show interest in the "main lineaments and features" of social change. This concern and the attempt to comprehend changing intellectual currents and long-term social change are not of primary interest for this thesis.

The question of why at a particular moment in time cohesion could become intellectually appealing, strategically attractive and thus widely used, is difficult, maybe even impossible to consider without a discussion of how it emerged in concrete political and discursive environments. Analysts, particularly in Britain, tend to conceive of the rise of cohesion as exemplary of certain epochal transformations, which are occasionally said to be leaning towards communitarianism (Robinson 2008), neoliberalism (Jones and Ward 2002; MacLeavy 2008), or some mixture of both. Besides problems for analyses that infer epochal transformations from the discussion of a limited number of cases, there is a risk of closure and over-generalisation, which means that this investigation opts for a less abstract, albeit more tentative, perspective on the formulation of political concerns.

We may be better advised to consider the need for political actors to position themselves, to be inventive and strategic in their diagnoses of social problems and to offer appealing solutions that mobilize constituencies and outmanoeuvre opponents. Derek McGhee (2003, 380), in his analysis of 'community cohesion', points to New Labour's "'super market sweep' tendencies" and its "highly selective 'smash and grab' deployment and understanding of concepts and social theory". This seems to speak for a

perspective that considers such ‘tendencies’ with an interest in the strategic purposes of their deployment, rather than with a view of how they resemble positions in political and social theory – resemblances that are approximations at best.

Jon Burnett (2008) usefully suggests that community cohesion can be understood as an expression of “liberal integrationism”. Arun Kundnani (2007; 2009), too, identifies a “liberal integrationism” in the new British fixation on social cohesion and national identity. His analysis corresponds with interesting accounts, such as by Christian Joppke (2008, 541; 2009, 116), on how states in Western Europe discover their liberal identities and formulate new requirements of belonging to a “liberal people”. Joppke sees the emergence of “a less procedural, more substantive variant of liberalism that prescribes a shared way of life, in which, say, man and women are equal and the secular trumps the religious” (2010, 138). Liberalism “transmutes into an identity, an ethical way of life to which everyone is expected to conform” (ibid, 142). Identifying a “civic turn” across European states, Per Mouritsen (2006; 2008) points to different moments of a related movement. The new salience of the concept of cohesion seems to fit this diagnosis of how an emerging integrationist orientation newly defines who belongs and who doesn’t.

Although these accounts are immensely useful, they generally do not consider the political conditions of either “identity liberalism” or the “civic turn”. Mouritsen has written authoritatively on how ideas of citizenship and belonging are currently being reconsidered where newly perfectionist and exclusionary principles take hold (Mouritsen and Olsen forthcoming). His account is less instructive for our understanding of the political conditions of this reconsideration (Mouritsen 2011). More generally, the politics of the ‘civic turn’ or ‘identity liberalism’ remain largely unexamined. A question for Joppke and Mouritsen would be why minority separatism was discovered and constructed as a pertinent social problem at a particular point in time? What are the political conditions of such constructions that surely do not just float freely in political discourse but require articulation, argumentation and marketing? Such questions tend to be elided in favour of somewhat sanitized macro perspectives on changing intellectual currents. Increasing “governmental concerns with social cohesion” (Mouritsen 2011, 1) are acknowledged as a given, not as in need of examination for the conditions of their emergence.

'Integrationism', the 'civic turn' or 'identity liberalism' are useful perspectives on new conceptions of social unity that have become politically relevant. They correspond to concerns in political and sociological theory that we consider below. But such characterisations alone do not give us sufficient purchase to understand how 'community cohesion' was introduced in Britain; why, in France, *fracture sociale* became a central theme in political debate; or how *Bürgergesellschaft* shaped political discourse in Germany. Integrationism circumscribes a trend, albeit loosely, but not the political dynamics that might make particular types of concern politically salient, plausible and widely used. To conceive of such dynamics, as well as for a better understanding of political change in the longer term, it is necessary to expose epochal analyses to the less than clear-cut circumstances that characterise how cohesion has been defined and introduced at particular points in time.

Although this investigation will suggest that there are similarities in how cohesion has been deployed across various contexts, and a certain logic to its utilisations that should make us reflect on changes of an 'epochal' kind, the starting point for this study will be these deployments—and not the place of cohesion in intellectual history or how its currency reflects long-term transformations of government or society. We propose to be alert to what cohesion *does* when it is referred to in political debate, and we suggest that this requires an understanding that is neither aloof from the political process nor absorbed with the literality of policy language in a way that would make both critical distance and an interest in symbolic and discursive operations of social cohesion impossible. We suggest not being stuck with face-value understandings of social cohesion, but to take its place in political discourse seriously by considering its strategic and imaginary possibilities. Such efforts needs to be contextually grounded and need to consider cohesion not as an abstract possibility or theoretical argument but as political language in use. The starting point for this thesis will be the currency of social cohesion, the concerns it bundles and addresses, and the strategic benefits it holds for its users.

The spread of cohesion

This variety of users is an interesting phenomenon in its own right. Social cohesion was adopted – notably in relation to equitable economic development – by the European Union (Council of the European Communities, 1986), by the OECD (1997), the Council of Europe (2000, 2004a), various think tanks (Barclay 1994, Berger 1998) and research

institutes (prominently, the Canadian Policy Research Initiative), before finding a way into the repertory of social policy rhetoric across western states.

The European Union began making sustained use of the notion of cohesion after its adoption in the 1986 Single European Act in relation to inequitable economic and social developments across its member states (see Hannequart 1992; Hooghe 1996). As a social policy orientation, it was further developed within the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Industrial Relations and Social Affairs (DG V) – in line with then-President of the European Commission Jacques Delors' agenda of social dialogue (see Wendon 1998). The European Union's Lisbon Agenda of 2000 accompanied the strategic goal of becoming "the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based economy in the world" with a concern for the divisive side effects of competitiveness, a concern to be met with a new emphasis on cohesion. As "territorial cohesion" and in relation to diverse characteristics of Europe's regions, the theme has been introduced in relation to their "harmonious development" (European Commission 2008, 3) and inter-regional cooperation. It continues to be a prominent policy objective, not least in relation to the perceived need to cushion the emphasis on competitiveness (see European Commission 2010) and to give at least a limited meaning to notions of European identity and citizenship (Hansen and Hager 2010).

The Council of Europe (2004, 3), less concerned with the conditions of economic growth and more interested in human rights and political participation, has established a Directorate General of Social Cohesion that is concerned, as stated in the Council's Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion, with the "strains and stresses caused by divisions and potential divisions" in societies. With its 1995 'World Summit on Social Development', the United Nations ascribed a vital role to social cohesion to counter "developments that include social polarization and fragmentation" (United Nations 1995, para. 68), developments that could potentially escalate in the "real contemporary experience" of "total social breakdown" (ibid., para. 69). In light of the novelty of its inception, and since the reference to the theme of cohesion in political language preceding the 1980s is scarce, this turn to cohesion is an impressive sign of the diffusion of policy language among international and supra-national institutions.

The spread of cohesion across international and intergovernmental organisations is paralleled by its new significance for national policy-makers, national research institutes

and think tanks. In the 1980s, Canada has been among the first to incorporate the notion in its public policy repertoire, in particular in relation to the challenging diversity of its multi-lingual and multi-cultural composition (Breton 1980; Beauvais and Jenson 2002). The late 1990s and 2000s saw a turn to cohesion across European states. Policy-making in France, Germany and Britain has become increasingly concerned with the stability and quality of social relations. In various local idioms, social cohesion has become a motif of considerable force that national governments employ in their analyses of societal change, to define political objectives and conduct public policy.

In policy strategies following the 2001 unrest in Northern English localities, the British government initiated and supported the development of its own version, *community cohesion*. In the late 1990s and early 2000s successive French governments introduced an encompassing social vision, a new *cap social*, under the banner of *cohésion sociale*. Similar policy orientations have been established in other European states, such as the German *Bürgergesellschaft*, which draws on a particular notion of civic solidarity and has gained considerable attention as template and rallying cry in social reform debates.

New concerns about social unity that are expressed using the language of cohesion often seem elusive. Commentators frequently suggest that the concept of cohesion itself appears amorphous and vague. Paul Bernard (1999, 48), considering the French *cohésion sociale*, argues that the "notion … shows the characteristic features of a *quasi-concept*, that is one of those hybrid constructions that politics (*le jeu politique*) proposes in order to seek out a possible consensus on how to understand reality – as well as for the construction of reality." Beauvais and Jenson (2002, 30) concur: cohesion is a "quasi-concept" that will be "judged not only by its analytical rigour but also by its utility" and that will be "challenged, rejected and dismissed by those who have other ideas how the future should be designed". Karsten Fischer (2006, 25-6) remarks that "crises of cohesion" are an expression of a tension between the liberal constitution of modern states and the desire to revert back to more substantial notions of the common good. He suggests that cohesion needs to be understood as a creature of this tension, a construction (ibid., 16). The definition of cohesion seems to depend on contexts, purposes and not least on the perception of the kinds of crises that cohesion is supposed to address. This dependence of cohesion is mirrored in the diversity of roles it plays for actors with different concerns and objectives. The European Commission (eg., 2010) usually employs cohesion in relation to economic development. The Council of

Europe (2004; 2008) considers cohesion to be an antidote to social divisiveness, extremism and the discrimination of minorities. National governments have put forward particular understandings of the cohesion theme that equally respond to divergent perceptions of social crises.

What cohesion, then, may be seen to mean depends on interpretation. Rather than addressing invariable concerns, various versions of cohesion have been developed in particular contexts, in line with the institutional remits of different users and responding to particular kinds of concern, all with their own conceptual and intellectual histories. In response to what cohesion may be seen to mean, Ade Kearns and Ray Forrest (2000, 996) suggest that it is usually

> used in such away that its meaning is nebulous but at the same time the impression is given that everyone knows what is being referred to. The usual premise is that social cohesion is a good thing, so it is conveniently assumed that further elaboration is unnecessary.

Ian Buck (2005, 44) concurs and emphasizes how, as it has been coined in relation to urban affairs, social cohesion

> is used as a label for social success, often without much thought about its exact meaning. It is popular shorthand in policy discussion, but cannot be regarded as a useful single concept for exploring the complex issues involved in urban social structures and processes.

Frequently, however, the reference to cohesion as a strategic policy goal reflects understandings of the notion not as a contested concept in need of specification, but as an undisputed necessity. In a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, *Inquiry into Income and Wealth*, Sir Peter Barclay (1994, 34, emphasis added) noted that "regardless of any moral argument or feelings of altruism, *everyone shares an interest in the cohesiveness of society*." Where the meaning of the concept did not appear as naturally given, there have been various efforts to specify and operationalize versions of the cohesion theme. In one such effort, Forrest and Kearns (2001, 2128) point to "a shared sense of morality and common purpose; aspects of social control and social order; the threat to social solidarity of income and wealth inequalities between people, groups and places; the level of social interaction within communities or families; and a sense of belonging to a place".[2] Morality, order, solidarity, equality, interaction, community,

2 These five dimensions were also adopted in Ted Cantle's (2001) influential report on 'community cohesion', which listed 'common values and a civic culture', 'social order and social control', 'social solidarity and reductions in wealth disparities', 'social network and social capital' and

family life and belonging: the list of pertinent aspects of cohesion is long. How these are differently emphasized and conjoined requires an approach that pays interest to the role of interpretation that informs how cohesion is defined.

There have been various attempts to demarcate the scope of different versions of the concept, such as of community cohesion (Local Government Association 2004), *cohésion sociale* (Ministère de l'emploi 2005a) and *Bürgergesellschaft* (Deutscher Bundestag 2002). Empirical social analysis, has been concerned to develop indicators for cohesion, and – frequently in line with the social capital agenda and its empirical research programme (Putnam 1995) – to develop strategies for measurement (see Hirschfield and Bowers 1997; Berman and Phillips 2004; Council of Europe 2005; Chan, To and Chan 2006; Council of Europe 2008). Such ideas have been operationalized differently and various suggestions pay particular attention to happiness, attachment to place, sense of security and belonging, or social and civic participation. In a report entitled *The Social Quality of Europe* Beck et al. (1997, 284) conceive of cohesion as concerning

> the processes that create, defend or demolish social networks and the social infrastructures underpinning these networks. An adequate level of social cohesion is one which enables citizens 'to exist as real human subjects, as social beings'.

The conditions allowing for the existence as a 'real human subject' are bound to be as disputed as what it means to be 'a social being'. The conception of society as made up of 'networks' and their 'social infrastructures' speaks to a specific understanding of the social. This understanding can hardly be taken as a given, not least as network ideas have been developed in a variety of different ways (see Castells 2000) and have been subjected to various types of criticism (Castel 2003; Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a). Cohesion, then, seems normatively dependent on conceptions of the 'good life' in society, which is measured, empirically, in terms of place attachment, social networks, happiness or 'belonging'. It is also dependent on the nature of society and of 'the

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'place attachment and identity' (see Chapter 5). Regarding this enumerative character of cohesion, Ian Buck (2005, 47) suggests that cohesion entails the "appeal to ideas of what makes a good society or a good city, without really specifying or prioritizing them". It is characteristic of the use of cohesion in political debate. The idea frequently seems to be that cohesion covers a commitment to a set of objectives that exist in virtual harmony. Even without prioritization, it is clear that the five-fold and other definitions of cohesion are normatively dependent on contested concepts, such as on understandings of order, solidarity and identity.

social'. These interdependencies highlight the need to consider understandings of social cohesion as interpretations.

The social scientific analysis that is concerned with the measurement of cohesion frequently sidesteps this need for interpretation. It is largely unconcerned with how cohesion relies on particular imaginations of 'the social'. It is not the purpose of this investigation to take issue with the development of an empirical programme of measurement or to dispute its relevance. But it has to be acknowledged that efforts to quantify cohesion are not unproblematic and never quite as 'natural' as purported. They are situated in the context of particular conceptual and normative understandings of society. They entail imaginations of society and these imaginations are of interest in the interpretive perspective that is introduced in Chapter 1.

Conceptual histories

While cohesion is sometimes specified with the help of indicators and methods of measurement, other specifications place the term in a tradition of concerns. The reference to cohesion is frequently accompanied by claims to theoretical lineage in social theory, most frequently to Émile Durkheim (Pahl 1991; Lynch 2001). Inasmuch as cohesion articulates concerns with social or political order, there is indeed a very broad tradition of related concern in political theory (Wrong 1994).[3] Attempts to support the contemporary use of cohesion with reference to long-standing concerns need to be queried with regard to how they might conceal a moment of interpretation. While there are established concerns with political order and social integration, there also are contemporary interests, understandings of society and strategic calculations that should be of interest. The following considers some general claims to conceptual and theoretical lineage, before turning specifically to a discussion of *cohésion* in the work of Émile Durkheim and to historical responses to his perspective.

The presence of social order, something that requires explanation given disintegrative tendencies seen to be at work, has been traced to acts of coercion, mutual self-interest, or a normative consensus: perspectives associated with Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau respectively (Wrong 1994). Similarly to their different understanding of the sources of

3 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to provide a thorough discussion of the tradition of this concern. See Dennis Wrong's (1994) *The Problem of Order: What Unites and Divides Society* for a compelling overview of conceptions of order in political and social theory.

order, the efforts required for its preservation and the 'natural' state of society have been conceived differently. Famously, for Thomas Hobbes disorder is natural and order artificial. In Chapter 29 of the Leviathan, he considers internal threats to the social compact and how 'internal diseases' may endanger the Commonwealth'. When its institutions

> come to be dissolved, not by external violence, but intestine disorder, the fault is not in men as they are the matter, but as they are the makers and orderers of them. … [T]hey cannot without the help of a very able architect be compiled into any other than a crazy building, such as, hardly lasting out their own time, must assuredly fall upon the heads of their posterity. (Hobbes 1994, 210)

For Hobbes, after the problematic exit out of the state of nature, established order remains fragile. Institutions that secure the Commonwealth require considerable efforts to be preserved and calibrated.[4] The nature of such efforts, in light of the chaotic condition of unorganized society, has been a concern in political theory over time. From Plato and Aristotle (for whom order was decidedly more 'natural' than for Hobbes) and their concern with the ordering of the *polis*, to Machiavelli's interest in the ideal, but sadly unavailable institutions of the republic, both classical and early modern political theory has grappled with conditions of order.

Significantly, the struggles of the 19th and 20th century, with their new politics of race, identity, culture and class, added further dimensions to these conceptions. Maybe most significantly, political theory's exclusive concern with the preservation of order has been amended by an interest in its unmaking. With socialism, feminism and anti-colonialism, the concern is not to preserve but to overcome bourgeois society, the

4 Thomas Hobbes' suggestion that an ill-designed Commonwealth – a "crazy building" – "must assuredly fall upon the heads of ... posterity" (Hobbes 1994, 210) provides a good account of the metaphorical nature of the language of integration and disintegration. Quentin Skinner (1996, 139), considering such metaphors, points to two functions of Hobbes' language. The first is the re-description of "actions or states of affairs in such a way as to lend additional force to whatever interpretation we may wish to put upon them. The other is by colouring or enhancing our arguments by means of the figures and tropes of speech." This work of 'rhetorical re-description' offers accounts or stories that present issues in a particular light and dramatizes their presentation by using metaphor. Dennis Wrong (1994, 3-4) gives a list of such metaphorical conceptions: "'Cement'—sometimes 'social cement'—'glue,' 'magnetic forces,' 'ties that bind,' 'the fabric of society,' or 'the social bond' are invoked and questions are asked about their nature and their strength, that is, the degree to which they are successful in 'holding society together,' preventing it from 'breaking down,' 'falling apart,' 'disintegrating,' or succumbing to powerful 'centrifugal tendencies.' Such language is redolent of physical, mechanical, chemical, and biological imagery, whether drawn from science or from everyday life. All language, to be sure is metaphorical, but some language, it can be argued, is more metaphorical than other language." The invariably metaphorical nature of how social order and disintegration are presented will be of some concern in Chapter 1.

hetero-normative system of patriarchal social relations, or the invisible whiteness that marks its racialized system of representations. Concerns with social order have therefore been articulated with different conceptual vocabularies and have responded to changing types of concern.

The relation of social cohesion to these concerns and to other concepts that are more firmly established in political theory – such as social integration, harmony, or political order – is not clearly defined. Arguably, with cohesion greater emphasis can be placed on the dimension of inter-personal unity. 'Order' sounds statist, impersonal and authoritarian, whereas harmony, however, is imbued with an emotionalism that does not fit in well with the customary terminology of liberal politics. While integration may refer to the haphazard combination of parts, cohesion is often used to point to the tightness, quality and persistence of ties between individuals. The Oxford English Dictionary (1989, 450) suggests as definitions the "action or condition of cohering; cleaving or sticking together", or – as distinguished from adhesion – the "union of like organs".

There is, then, a certain understanding of cohesion as pertaining to moral orientations that are purposively shared. In this sense it may appear somewhat closer to the German tradition of thinking of social ties in terms of *Bindung* (attachment) – a notion whose relationship to cohesion the German sociologist Franz-Xaver Kaufmann (2002, 26) considers as follows:

> In terms of social relationships, cohesion denotes a high degree of proximity, especially in terms of space, but also in other forms of inescapable interpersonal connectedness. Cohesion means a state in which people's behavior and actions can be observed, where spontaneous social control is possible and often operative.

This emphasis on proximity, tightness and a measure of control – as it is present in the German *Bindung* – has not stood in the way of cohesion becoming a prominent notion in contexts where different, maybe more liberal and less organic traditions of conceiving of social relations had previously been more influential.

It is clear that the conceptual relationship of cohesion to alternative notions is fairly murky. This lack of conceptual clarity leads to a situation in which particular horizons of meaning that are present in cohesion do not foreclose its adaptation across contexts. As regards its more specific place in social theory, there are divergent claims to origins

and lineage. Ferdinand Tönnies' (1991[1935]) duality of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is occasionally mentioned, just as Talcott Parson's (1967) 'normative integration', or the work of Charles Lockwood (1999).[5] Most frequently, however, and reaching back somewhat further to the progenitor of a scientific interest in social relations, it is Émile Durkheim's work that is emphasized. Ray Pahl (1991, 348) sees a trajectory from 'Durkheim to the European Commission', and its interests in exclusion and cohesion in the 1980s and 90s. Ruth Levitas considers the prominence of social cohesion as the signal of a new 'Durkheimian hegemony' (Levitas 1996). It seems appropriate, then, to consider some aspects of Durkheim's understanding of cohesion, its intellectual trajectory and reception.

Durkheim indeed uses *cohésion*, yet only somewhat casually as a byword to notions such as *regularité* (1922[1893], vi) or *intégration générale de la societé* (1922[1893], 28). It is not on par with relatively well-defined concepts, such as *solidarité*. As is well known, Durkheim's work is usually understood as a qualified defense of the moral potentials of modernity. The strong communitarian and, to some extent, anti-modern vein in which cohesion can be invoked, speaking to anxieties about value loss or moral decay, may seem rather foreign to his concerns. This position becomes reasonably evident when taking into account the political context in which Durkheim developed his social theory. The historical environment for the development of Durkheim's social theories was characterised by quarrel between liberals, leftists, conservatives, monarchists and political Catholics in late 19th century France. The public debate over the miscarriage of justice that had seen Captain Alfred Dreyfus sentenced to life imprisonment in French Guiana, the *Dreyfus Affair*, triggered significant debates about French identity and the sources of solidarity that were required for French society to cohere and prosper. It was also the place for Durkheim to articulate his understanding of social solidarity in response to political questions of considerable urgency (Bredin 1983; Birnbaum and Berlière 1994).

Durkheim, in short, suggested that modern individualism does not necessarily lead to social fragmentation. The reactionary interventions of those accusing the supporters of Dreyfus, the *Dreyfusards*, of weakening national unity with their support for the rights of an individual had misunderstood, Durkheim alleged, the nature of modern solidarity.

5 Berman and Phillips (2004, 4) even claim that cohesion is "more or less directly descended" from Tönnies' duality.

Individualism and the collective social aspirations, the modern *conscience collective*, should not be seen to be in conflict. In fact, individualism had become an ineliminable part of modern social arrangements and could by itself provide for sources of modern solidarity. This is what Durkheim has in mind when he, without a pejorative meaning, refers to the 'cult of the individual':

> The cult, of which he is at once both object and agent, does not address itself to the particular being which he is and which bears his name, but to the human person (*la personne humaine)* wherever it is to be found, and in whatever form it is embodied. Impersonal and anonymous, such an aim, then, soars far above all individual minds *(consciences particulières*) and can thus serve them as a rallying point. (Durkheim 1973[1898], 48)

The establishment of a society with moral purpose, showing a strong *conscience collective,* is possible without reverting to pre-modern ideas of homogeneous unity that fail to take account of the irrevocable individualism of the modern situation. The defence of Drefyus was thus, Durkheim alleged, precisely in line with the sources of modern solidarity and not at all, as the *anti-Dreyfusards* suggested, a threat to the social and moral integration of the French nation. Defending individual rights means defending "the vital interest of society, for [it] prevents the criminal impoverishment of that last reserve of collective ideas and feelings which is the very soul of the nation" (ibid. 53-4). In *De la Division du Travail Social*, Durkheim (1922[1893]) gave this account a somewhat more elaborate underpinning when he brought the social forces of differentiation into the picture—forces that may provide for a type of normative-functional interdependence, famously coined as 'organic solidarity'.

Organic solidarity, in short, is integration through difference, while mechanic solidarity is integration by virtue of similarity. While pre-modern or tribal societies were seen to cohere 'mechanically', modern society allows for the former—though this does not mean that the appeal to similarity has become irrelevant. Indeed, modern societies are in many ways characterised by the phantom pains of lost homogeneity. Collective symbols and ritualized functions remain important, and Durkheim refers in particular to the penal system and the symbolism of dispensing punishment for the maintenance of a modern *conscience collective* (see Chapter 2 in more detail). Durkheim, arguably, did not conceive of the pluralism that now characterizes many Western cities, where questions of how homogeneity and cohesion may be achieved or sustained, and what rituals and

collective symbols this requires, have become relevant in new ways. Gerd Baumann (2011, 288) thus suggests that

> [n]arrow readings of Durkheim view rituals as crystallizations of basic values uniformly endorsed by communities that perform them with a view to themselves, ultimately to create and confirm their cohesion as communities. In plural societies, this position is complicated by the presence of 'Others', be it as 'visible' participants or as 'invisible' categorical referents.

Rituals and symbols that can sustain a modern *conscience collective* may be seen to be more difficult to establish under such conditions. Not just socio-economic interdependence, but cultural pluralism and the dispersal of governmental authority appear – or are considered – as salient features of modern social conditions (Bauböck 1996). Attempts to make Durkheimian ideas relevant for the present day are faced with novel challenges.

It is not the point here to suggest a particular perspective on Durkheim, or to argue for particular understandings of his sociological theory. But it is important to note that the reference to Durkheim in support of a concern with social cohesion remains unconvincingly narrow as long as it fails to take full notice of the nature of his suggestions. For Durkheim (1952[1897]), atomization, social disintegration and *anomia* constitute real problems that arise from pathological forms of social integration. Durkheim's remedy, however, does not depend on the imposition of values or the institution of a wholly new kind of solidarity that is absent from the social contexts at hand. Durkheim's critique of the pre-modern conservatism of the *anti-Dreyfusards* is a repudiation of the suggestion that social pathologies can be countered with an infusion of values, and his normative functionalism is not concerned with values that are instilled, imposed or artificially inserted to provide for collective aspirations. Rather, he argues for careful and contextual considerations of the potentials of modern types of social organisation. We may speculate that he would reject policies concerned with reverting back to pre-modern notion of togetherness without a basis in lived reality. Anthony Giddens (1971, 72) thus rightly remarks that Durkheim's core proposition is that "society is not, in spite of the declining significance of traditional moral beliefs, inevitably tending towards disintegration." Veit Bader (2001, 132) puts this Durkheimian commitment as succinctly as possible: the unity of modern society "cannot be opposed to differentiation; on the contrary, differentiation is its way to create unity."

This does not mean that moral integration is negligible or unimportant; quite the contrary (Durkheim 1952[1897]). There is a different, social-integrationist sense in which cohesion – much more in line with Durkheimian ideas – may be seen to support a conception of social and moral unity. We develop this suggestion in the following section where we are less concerned with sociological theory and more with the variety of contextual and political uses of cohesion.

Two types of cohesion

Cautious sociological analyses and pluralist social theory tend to emphasize that contemporary societies do not require emphatic ideals of political unity or social cohesion (Mann 1970; Unger 1975; Bader 2001). It seems, though, that such reservations do not necessarily hold much sway in political debate, where a concern with social fragmentation, disunity or, for example, partisanship in the political system is often widely evident. Even the political entrepreneurship of contemporary social theorists like Anthony Giddens (1998; 2000) often supports and substantiates political propositions – usually in response to perceived tendencies of disintegration – that are deeply imbued with a language of communality and shared social morality (see also Beck 1992; Rosanvallon 1995). Despite the fact that such contributions and the public discourse of social cohesion more generally often appear undertheorized and alarmist, they point to one significant distinction. That is the difference between a sense of unity that is to be found in cultural or moral homogeneity, and a sense of differentiated unity where – despite diversity and pluralism – shared orientations, shared dispositions and, most significantly, a shared spirit of activity provides for *integrationist unity*.

The *anti-Dreyfusards*, however, have recently experienced some belated success. The political trend across Europe indeed shows a strong desire for cultural homogeneity, in particular where cultural diversity is experienced in newly challenging ways and where the perceived otherness of post-immigration groups is considered to be a problem. German *Leitkultur*, recently reinvigorated in Angela Merkel's attack on multiculturalism, and the recent *grand débat* on French national identity (Sarkozy 2009) show the continued appeal of homogeneous nationhood. Britain is no exception and notions of cohesion have been used here for similarly anti-pluralist purposes. In an article for a journal published by the Royal United Services Institute, Prins and Salisbury (2008, 23) put their case for cohesion as follows:

> The United Kingdom presents itself as a target, as a fragmenting, post-Christian society, increasingly divided about interpretations of its history, about its national aims, its values and in its political identity. The fragmentation is worsened by the firm self-image of those elements within it who refuse to integrate. This is a problem worsened by the lack of leadership from the majority which in mis-placed deference to 'multiculturalism' failed to lay down the line to immigrant communities, thus undercutting those within them trying to fight extremism. The country's lack of self-confidence is in stark contrast to the implacability of its Islamist terrorist enemy, within and without.

In the face of 'terrorist threats', radicalism and 'home-grown terrorism', cohesion is presented as the antidote to cultural uncertainty. It therefore justifies bold and aggressive efforts in defence of 'Western values'. In Britain, this understanding of cohesion is prominently associated with Douglas Murray and his *Centre for Social Cohesion*.[6] Murray points to cohesion as a necessary state that British society must achieve in order to prevail in the 'clash of civilizations'. Although this portrayal of how cohesion is at risk is widespread across Western Europe, it is not our concern – at least not primarily and exclusively. The homogeneity of *Leitkultur* and the new prominence of anti-pluralist arguments in debates on national identity is important to consider, and requires urgent exploration and critique. But it does not exhaustively capture the ways that social unity is invoked with cohesion.

The language of social cohesion that has recently gained popularity in both national and supranational policy-making contexts is usually of a different kind. The sense of unity that is appealed to, rather than being grounded in ideas of cultural sameness, is more directed towards the idea of shared activity. The political agendas of community cohesion, *cohésion sociale* and *Bürgergesellschaft* generally speak of responsibility, a civic spirit, and social activity. A good example of this is a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation where cohesion is introduced in response to notable social problems: "the factors which are fostering the social diseases of drugs, crime, political extremism and social unrest" (Barclay 1994, 34). While the sense of a purposive unity plays a role for tackling 'social diseases', this unity is not to be found in cultural or social homogeneity. It is conceived differently and works with the appeal to civicness, shared interests and shared dispositions.

These conditions are not appealed to as pre-existing, but as objects whose achievement requires continuous efforts; social unity needs to be maintained through the deployment

[6] See http://www.socialcohesion.co.uk/.

of sophisticated means of governmental intervention, autonomy needs to be exercised, and individual dispositions that are harmful to social cohesion need to be changed. As Pekka Sulkunen (2007, 328, also 2009) points out, the newly prominent idea is that "[s]ocial integration follows automatically from the autonomy of individuals." This understanding of social unity thus emphasizes autonomy and its exercise in individual efforts that need to be undertaken in the pursuit of social cohesion.

These efforts may themselves be seen as dependent on certain preconditions. Some individuals are certainly better equipped than others to exercise their autonomy and become active in the sense that such understandings of social unity are seen to require. This matches the understanding that the problematic behaviour of certain groups constitutes a particular threat to social unity through 'ethnic segregation', political apathy, or social exclusion. The capacities for the pursuit of particular kinds of activity, such as for the kind of 'mixing and mingling' that is expected of ethnic minority groups or for 'active citizenship', may be unevenly distributed in society. The conditions of purposive unity, though they are separate from what is required when unity is conceived of as substantial, homogeneous similarity, are not without their own accounts of who belongs and who doesn't. Out-groups are therefore identified by their inability to pursue desirable forms of social activity, rather than through their deviance from ethnic, racial, cultural or religious homogeneity.

These ideas are developed in more detail in Chapter 2, where we also provide a review of the literature on activation and suggest that social activity, when it is conceived as a requirement for social unity, can take various shapes. It is not just activity in the labour market that may be introduced as a requirement, but also mobility, tolerance, active citizenship and, more generally, the flexible pursuit of projects.

At this stage, these preliminary thoughts only serve to highlight our suggestion that political appeals to substantial homogeneity and to purposive unity are not as far apart as they might appear. In reference to unity and cohesion in political discourse, the distinction between cohesion in a Durkheimian sense and substantive similarity in the spirit of the *anti-Dreyfusards* may not be as conspicuous as in their respective theoretical agendas. Both, for example, may be invoked where new boundaries between in- and out-groups are drawn and new hierarchies between desirable character types are established. This parallel is particularly apparent considering that both kinds of

cohesion have accounts of disintegration that partially overlap and that may be politically invoked and deployed in similar ways.

From theory to interpretation

The variety of theoretical conceptions, the overlap of arguments and the murky nature of its political expressions mean that cohesion is difficult to pin down. The concept of cohesion is maybe best understood as a 'floating signifier' that is open to be appropriated and filled with meaning in different ways. Contextual understandings of this concept are likely to reflect political motivations and objectives, rather than a semantic substance or a theoretical tradition. Speaking from the Australian context, James Jupp (2007, 17) points to a further challenge: "most of the perceived threats to social cohesion have been based on worst-case scenarios which never materialized in reality." Ray Forrest and Ade Kearns (2001, 2126) concur:

> [O]ccasional predictions of cohesion in crisis typically rest on assumptions that the social element of a previous era is crumbling and that we are being collectively cast adrift in a world in which the previous rules of social interaction and social integration no longer apply.

Predictions of cohesion in crisis have become considerably more widespread, and the threat of social disintegration has become a frequent motif in political debate. Crime, Tony Blair (1993a, 28) suggested in his early positioning as Labour's prospective leader, "arises from our disintegration as a community". "A solution to this disintegration", he added (Blair 1993b), must come from the rediscovery of "values and principles". Gerhard Schröder (2000a) invoked a "general sense of insecurity" and proposed *Zivile Bürgergesellschaft* as a solution. Jacques Chirac's (1994; 2007) reference to *fracture sociale*, the central theme of his 1995 campaign for the French presidency, equally invoked and channeled a sense of anxiety about a particular understanding of social and moral disintegration.

In its relationship to these invocations of crises, cohesion seems to demarcate not so much a field of conceptually informed understandings of society, but a broad array of concerns that can be substantiated in different ways. In the formulation of such concerns, popular anxieties about moral decline, cultural dissolution and value loss may coincide with more nuanced and theoretically informed understandings of threats to cohesion, such as the ones that point, following Durkheim, to difficulties in the social division of labour or to declining 'social capital'. In political language, the two are often

difficult to distinguish and they may inform and support one another. A significant challenge for this investigation, then, is that it needs to consider the effort that goes into the construction of contextual understandings of cohesion. This requires a careful analysis of the ways in which various understandings of social disintegration – be they informed by public anxieties, derived from social theory, or introduced in relation to material social problems – come together in political debate and become relevant for policy-making purposes.

In this context, James Jupp's comment on the ambiguity of threats is instructive for how it omits the concern with how social cohesion itself is defined and projected. The particular salience of scenarios of disintegration is poorly conceived if its referent object, the idea of society as stable, natural and empirically 'out there', remains unexamined. The construction of threats to cohesion needs to be understood in relation to the imagined 'cohesive society' and to the efforts that go into the projection of a vision of integrated social life. To understand how social cohesion becomes a palpable and plausible theme in contemporary politics, we need to consider the coincidence between imaginaries of social disintegration and imaginaries of social cohesion.[7] While Chapter 2 makes suggestions on how to conceive of activation as a requirement of the politics of cohesion, Chapter 1 reviews this interpretive moment and suggests a conceptual framework for its analysis.

Research question

Drawing together the elements that have been raised in this preliminary discussion, we may then suggest that social cohesion has been saliently adopted in relation to a range of notable social problems across Western states. While we need to distinguish between different understandings of cohesion, in public debate various invocations may coincide and reinforce one another. The analytical challenge for this study is that cohesion is neither just an analytical concept in the social sciences; nor is it only a prominent theme

7 Approaches that consider the construction of societal insecurity in the tradition of Carl Schmitt (1996) as part of the invocation of a state of emergency, by contrast, appear of limited use. It is not merely the invocation of disintegration, but the way disintegration connects to the wholesome, cohesive and integrated community, no less a construction, that accounts for how the politics of cohesion operates. The notion of 'societal securitization' (Waever 1993, 23-6; Buzan, Wæver and Wilde 1998, 128) takes the societal self as a pre-analytical, natural given. The point, however, is that the insecurity of disintegration, identity loss, or societal fragmentation is as much open to constructions as its counterpart, the invocation of cohesion or a stable societal identity. Not one but two dimensions need to be considered.

in political discourse. It is both, and its various uses are characteristically *in-between* everyday, public policy and social science discourse.

Rather than imposing a conceptual framework on debates that are empirically multifarious and oftentimes confused, we suggest a different kind of organisation that resonates with the way Barclay (1994) and others conceive of cohesion as a solution to various problems or with Amin's (2005, 614) "regenerative tonic" in relation to broad constellations of social problems. Social cohesion has become prominent in relation to fields of concern and constellations of social problems. New languages of social unity have become salient across different domains, thus indicating that cohesion is differently negotiated and problematized across countries as well as across different fields of application. In Germany, *Bürgergesellschaft* problematizes civic apathy, declining turnout at elections and the weakening of civil society organisation. In France, *cohésion sociale* responds to *exclusion sociale*, a field of concerns that invokes in particular the failure of the French socio-economic model and the welfare state to create social inclusivity. In Britain, *community cohesion* has been coined in relation to urban unrest among predominantly Muslim youths, to ethnic segregation and so-called 'parallel lives'.

Forms of social cohesion have thus become salient in different ways and across different domains. In the three contexts preliminarily identified here these forms correspond to political, socio-economic and communalist fields of concern. These contextual variations of cohesion foreground different qualities that are seen to be required in order to address important social problems. These qualities include civic values and commitment in the voluntary sector, individual responsibility in the welfare state and inter-communal engagement between ethnically marked groups or individuals. Despite this variety across its fields of application, a common denominator among the politics of cohesion is the emphasis on the need for individuals to become more responsible, to change their lives and, in general, to become active. The idea of generalized activity is a shared feature of cohesion across the contexts and the concern is thus to *consider how social cohesion has been introduced and defined in political agendas in a way that puts new emphasis on a sense of activity, mobility and individual responsibility*. There are three components to this question.

- The turn to cohesion is puzzling, given the relative novelty of the notion in public policy agendas. While cohesion is often invoked as a conventional, long-standing and natural concern of government, this thesis is interested in pointing out its construction and the imagination of society that makes cohesion a salient concern. It re-traces the introduction of the cohesion theme and its adoption for public policy purposes in France, Germany and Britain.

- Cohesion indicates a newly powerful mode for making sense of society. It works as a focal point that bundles together diverse anxieties about the viability of contemporary social arrangements and draws attention to some, however imprecisely delineated, root causes of social decline. When it is deployed in policy language, it involves a shift away from the surface treatment of social diseases and allows actors to claim to provide radical solutions to social dislocations. Such political deployments need to be considered in order to understand how cohesion has become a compelling and plausible motif. Developing the conceptual frame of 'social imaginaries', we introduce a particular perspective for the study of this motif.

- Heightened activity is generally considered a suitable remedy for the social ills that are identified in the politics of cohesion. The coincidence between cohesion and social activation requires interrogation. Until recently, problems pertaining to the welfare state, race relations and political participation have conventionally been conceived as requiring different types of governmental activity; yet the politics of cohesion provides an alternative: social activation.

In addition to these analytical interests, there is a critical concern that motivates this study. With cohesion as a political priority, marginalized populations are too often blamed for their own predicament through being described as insufficiently adapted, active, tolerant, connected, engaged or flexible. Welfare recipients or ethnic minority groups are called upon to change their ways. A first line of critique thus takes issue with the injustice of the politics of cohesion as it singles out the behaviour of disadvantaged groups. The second considers the theme of social cohesion for how its practical application and strategic deployment contrast with a more democratic imagination of the social.

This dual critical impetus suggests that the object 'society' needs to be opened up for the kinds of democratic imaginations that do not require perpetual activation. These suggestions are developed in more detail in the following two chapters, where the work of Luc Boltanski (2011) is considered for how it contributes towards a critical perspective on agendas of social cohesion. More significantly, however, this perspective is elucidated in the engagement with the development and deployment of social cohesion in three country cases.

Three contexts of cohesion

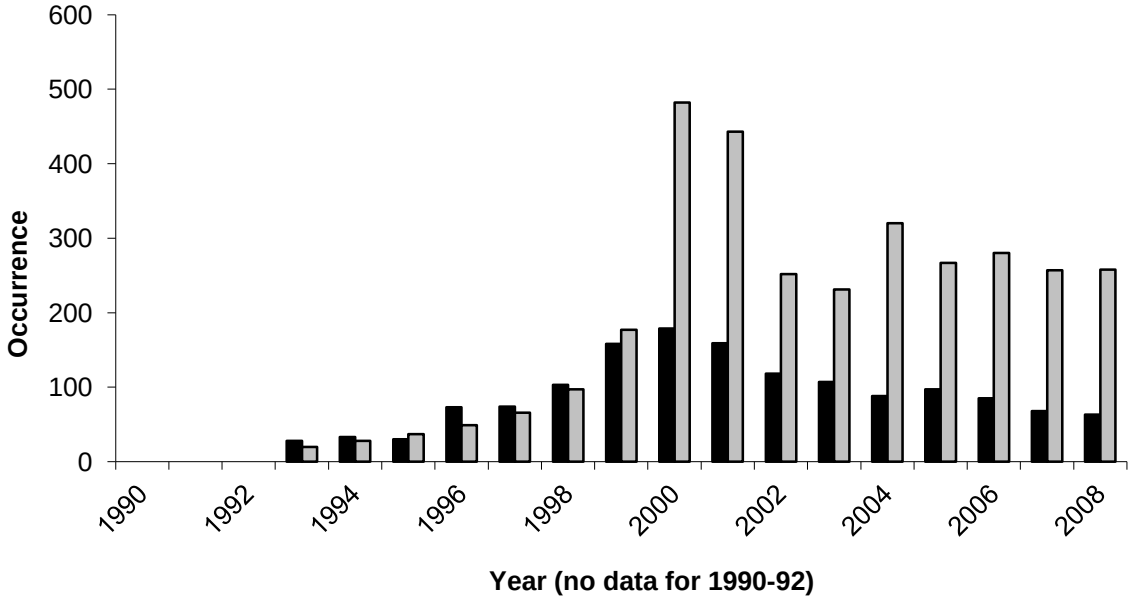
The discussion of developments towards social cohesion in three country cases serves to suggest answers to the three questions that we have posed. We study significant speeches, interventions in debates and the newspaper coverage to contextualize the development of cohesion in national agendas. We consider such interventions in the context of conceptual traditions and a competitive political environment. Given this broad interest, we do not claim to provide a picture of each country case that is even nearly complete. The core concern of the investigation is to bring out how social cohesion was introduced so as to coincide with and support new requirements of social activation. For this purpose, the investigation selectively engages with debates and representations. For reasons of length and feasibility, at other times it maintains a bird's eye view, such as regarding the vast output of public policy material on cohesion strategies.

Germany: Bürgergesellschaft

In the context of recent revelations about wide-spread tax evasion among members of the German business elite, but also in relation to welfare fraud and youth criminality, Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble (2009) remarked that the according offences should not be seen as trivial: they pose a threat to social cohesion (*Zusammenhalt der Gesellschaft*). More than this, they are a symptom of the weakening of social bonds and of a lack of commitment to the common good. While such rhetorical gestures to moral decline are wide-spread among public figures with culturally conservative inclinations, *gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt* has been at the centre of wider debates in recent years – most notably in the course of the drawn-out legislative quarrels over immigration and naturalization procedures (Bade and Münz 2008). Equally, concerns with cohesion figured prominently in debates on the repercussions of an increasingly unequal

distribution of material wealth and the formation of a newly marginalized groups in society, as well as in debates regarding the precarious living conditions that result from increasingly flexible forms of employment (Heite et al. 2007).

Figure 1: Mention of *Zivilgesellschaft* (grey) and *Bürgergesellschaft* (black) in *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (own data)



In recent years, *Bürgergesellschaft* has been one of the most prominent expressions of a concern for cohesion. Introduced and defined in the early 1990s, the concept became widely used in German social and political reform debate in between 1998 and 2002 (see Figure 1). One of the prominent participants in this debate, Social-Democrat MP Wolfgang Thierse, pointed out that "the relationship between individuals, state and society has become unclear and requires revision" in light of the experience of "dissolution, breakdown of social ties, new social polarisation" (Thierse 2002). *Bürgergesellschaft* seems to respond to this need for revision; it is frequently employed synonymously with *Zivilgesellschaft*, usually translated as civil society.[8] The concept of *Bürgergesellschaft* emerged as a significant point of reference in social policy debates. It originally drew on the positive role of civil society movements in the democratic transitions in the East but became, at least since the late 1990s, a broader template for the remodeling of German society (Klein 2001). In these debates, the tradition of

8 There are, of course, considerable difficulties with these translations in that they may fail to fully capture the particular contextual meaning of the original terms (Révauger 2001). The German and French chapters are thus, to some extent, attempts at reconstructing particular conceptual traditions that should make it somewhat easier to compare and contrast notions such as *Zivilgesellschaft* or *exclusion sociale* to their English counterparts.

Bürgergesellschaft and its socio-historical lineage are particularly significant and will be considered in some detail in Chapter 4.

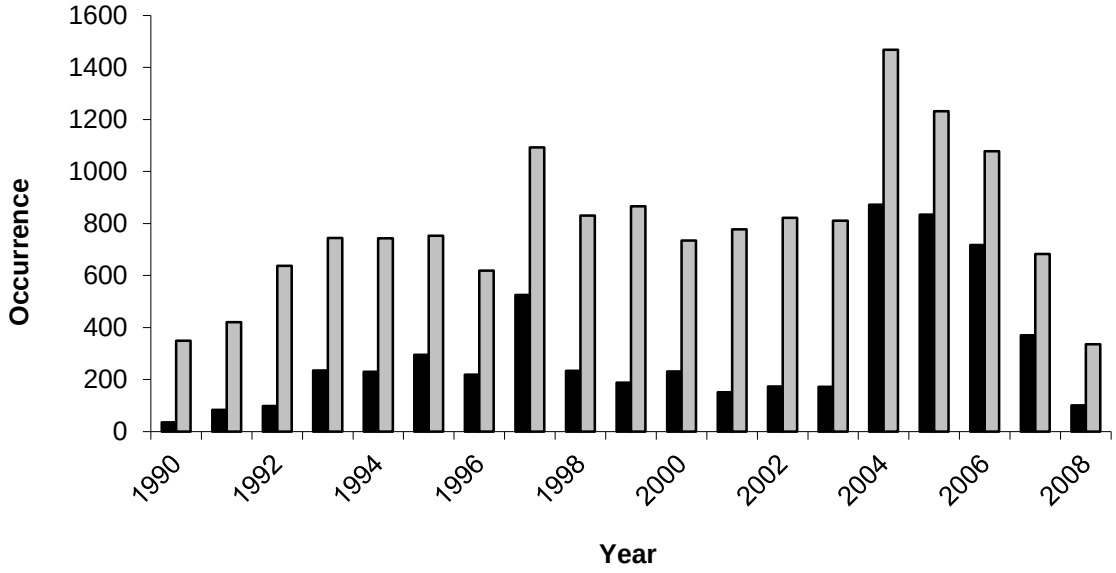
Bürgergesellschaft coincided with a significant re-orientation of Schröder's Social Democrats towards the welfare state. The need to question traditional ways of service provision and to adopt the idea of an 'enabling' or 'activating' welfare state figures highly in programmatic statements that draw on the notion of *Bürgergesellschaft*. Shortcomings of the welfare state and civic apathy were seen to add up to a threatening scenario of social sclerosis. *Bürgergesellschaft* responds to this scenario in that it invokes a new sense of direction and responsibility. It has channelled public policy making towards an increasing reliance on civic and socio-economic activation and individual responsibility.

France: Cohésion Sociale

The *liens sociaux*, the binding ties of French society, have been considered to be problematic at different points in the history of the 5th Republic. *Cohésion sociale* became a full-fledged political objective and the headline title for social policy initiatives in 1997 and 2004/5 (see Figure 2). The crisis of *cohésion sociale* is widely portrayed as a crisis of the French social model, and planning for cohesion involves, in recent debates, a focus on the efficiency of welfare provision, the accessibility of services and equality in their provision.

Despite a significant role for the state in the preservation of republican solidarity, the recent debate has incorporated components of social capital and civil society ideas that supplement a state-centred rhetoric (Levy 2005). French *Étatisme* is increasingly embellished with an emphasis on micro-social ties and intra-state relations that appear to sit somewhat uneasily in a republican tradition. While the inclusion into the opportunities afforded by the central state was originally situated at the core of strategies of cohesion, this has been increasingly supplemented with emphases on communal relations and active citizenship. Thus, while Denis Helly, a perceptive commentator of *cohésion sociale*, would still draw a contrast between French and American perspectives (Helly 1999), this appears to have lost some of its self-evidence (Helly 2008).

Figure 2: Mention of *cohésion* (grey) and *cohésion sociale* (black) in *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro* (own data)



The turn to cohesion resonates with a new problem perception for the *dirigiste* model and a turn towards what Chevallier (2004) refers to as *État regulateur*: the state as an arbiter whose primary function no longer consists of social intervention, but instead in the guarantee and maintenance of social cohesion (2004, para. 5). In a similar vein, Hugues Sibille (1994) made a case for social cohesion as a contrast to an older understanding of welfare. The alternative to "redistributive solidarity", Sibille argued, lay in "active citizenship", "personalized relations, proximity, and the mobilization of a system of actors". A new common sense in French public policy considers proximity as a "means of improving the quality of public services" (Cole 2006, 90). While this does not imply a diminishing scope for the state, it points towards new understanding of how the state intervenes: a "trend towards social activation" (Palier 2005, 139) has become evident in French social policy.

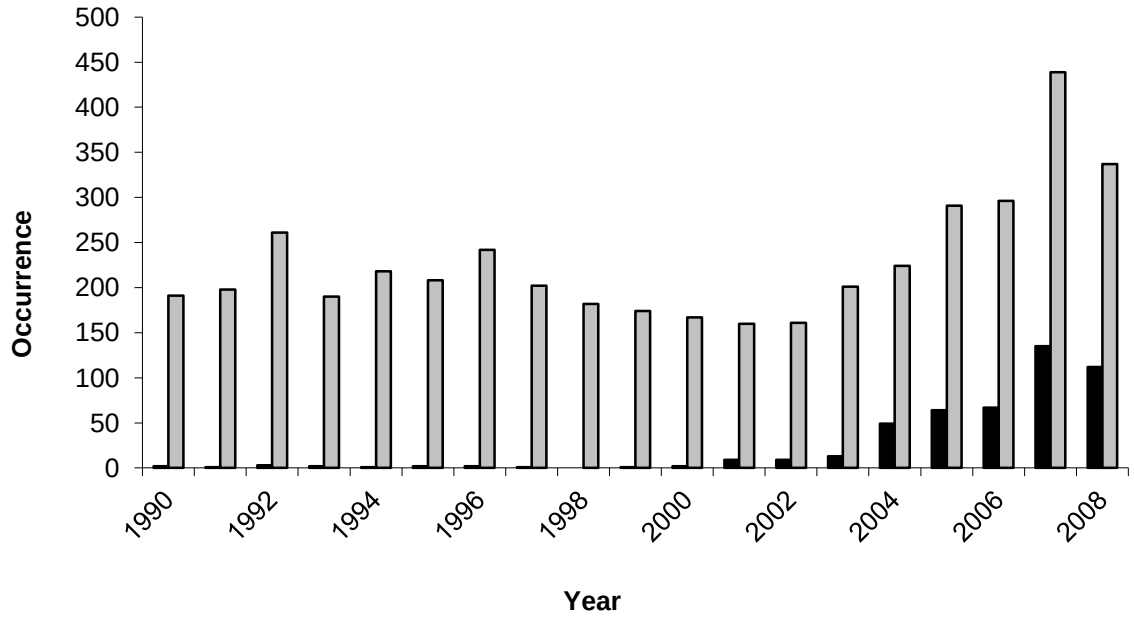
Britain: Community Cohesion

In the United Kingdom, references to cohesion have become widespread, and a particular version, 'community cohesion', has obtained a prominent position in New Labour public policy initiatives (McGhee 2003; Burnett 2004; Robinson 2005). For one prominent protagonist in the development of this agenda, Ted Cantle (2005, 26), 'community cohesion' is

> fundamentally concerned with changing underlying attitudes and values and represents a very different approach to the work presently done under the equal opportunities banner, which emphasises the use of systems and processes to constrain and change behaviour as a means of delivering equality and fairness.

Cohesion has been introduced as a strategic goal for a wide range of policy activity, from urban renewal, asylum and immigration policies, to policing, race relations, economic recovery and domestic and international security. Conservative groups, such as *Civitas* (Stone and Edwards 2007) or its offshoot, the *Centre for Social Cohesion*, invoke cohesion to bring into focus the alleged weakness of liberal pluralism vis-à-vis a negative and unitary conception of Islam. Research institutes provide guidance to local policy-makers on issues of cohesion (iCoCo 2006), advocacy organisations increasingly frame their requests in the language of social cohesion and ministerial portfolios have been renamed to reflect the new concern. This is surprising, since the term, as David Robinson (2005, 1412) remarks, "had no place in the vocabulary of urban theory or public policy prior to the disturbances in 2001". In fact, it was conspicuously absent from the British public debate, and it is only in the process in which the 2001 unrest of Bradford, Burnley and Oldham was analyzed and interpreted that social cohesion, or a lack thereof, came to figure as powerful device in public discourse.

Figure 3: Mention of cohesion (grey) and community cohesion (black) in *The Guardian* and *The Times* (own data)



Proponent of the notion, however, were able to draw on a broad socio-moral turn that had become increasingly salient in the 1990s and culminated in the successful 1997

campaign of New Labour, rebranded as the party of community and social responsibility. In a number of episodes, such as the murder of James Bulger in 1993 and the ensuing political debates over how the killing signified a moral crisis, socio-moral arguments came to be tested (Hay 1995). Thatcherite competitive individualism was gradually put on the defensive, and society, the thing Thatcher said did not exist, returned with a vengeance. As early as 1995, Geoff Mulgan – co-founder of the think tank Demos and later Director of Policy at Downing Street – observed "an intensive search for a sense of community cohesion, for ties that can bind people together" (Mulgan 1995). David Marquand (1996, 9, emphasis in original), noticed the still "inchoate and tentative" intimations of this newly emerging theme: the "threat of fragmentation and anomie have fostered a new concern with the dangers of social exclusion and the *a priori* necessity for social cohesion" Moreover, towards the end of Conservative rule, Will Hutton (1995, 23-4) observed that Britain faced "explosive levels of stress. The individualist, *laissez-faire* values which imbue the economic and political elite have been found wanting".

Cohesion appeared as an extension of this socio-moral turn and its application in the area of ethnic relations. In the aftermath of unrest in 2001, 'community cohesion' became widely used in policy reports and public debate (see Figure 3). "Civic pride" (Ouseley 2001), new "principles of citizenship" (Cantle 2001), or the creation of a "common vision" (Clarke 2001) for the localities affected by the unrest, were headline recommendations of officially commissioned reports. Chapter 4 examines in particular this early period of the politics of community cohesion in light of preceding debates and New Labour's political agenda.

Studying the politics of cohesion

Political agendas in all three countries followed particular contextual developments. Social cohesion was not merely copied, such as by incorporating a set of readily available policy strategies from supra-national institutions or domestic counterparts. It was adapted, defined and made suitable for particular contextual purposes. As Pierre Bourdieu (2002, 4) notes on the international circulation of ideas, "texts circulate without contexts"; that is: "they do not take their context" or the particularity of their "field of production" with them. Invariably, they are re-interpreted in line with the

features of their "field of reception" (ibid.).[9] For the turn to cohesion across three policy-making contexts, this means that we do not face clearly defined ideas or policy prescription, but interpretations that emerged in particular places and in correspondence with established concerns and features of political debate.[10] Hence, it will be necessary to examine how such features of political debate and historical understandings play a role in how notions of social cohesion were defined and substantiated in political discourse. The reference to the socio-political lineage of the concept of *Bürgergesellschaft* in German debate makes it necessary to consider the according claims in some detail. By contrast, the French concern with *exclusion sociale* and agendas towards *cohésion soicale* were substantiated by ambiguous conceptions of republican solidarity, which will be examined. New definitions of community and the socio-moral turn of New Labour provided a background for the adoption of community cohesion and require particular consideration.

Not just historical particularities but exigencies of political debate play a role in how agendas of social cohesion were developed. This has not taken place in an argumentative vacuum, but under conditions of political pressure. Cohesion came into the picture as an attempt to re-define society in competitive political environments. The introduction of *fracture sociale,* the commentary on political disaffiliation in Germany, and the idea of communal disintegration that Tony Blair invoked were characterized by strategic considerations. In relation to how he invoked the murder of Jamie Bulger in 1993 to carve out a new social imaginary, Blair (2010, 57) remarks:

> Very effectively I made it into a symbol of a Tory Britain in which, for all the efficiency that Thatcherism had achieved, the bonds of social and community well-being has been loosed, dangerously so.

9 This is also where the usefulness of political science literature on policy diffusion seems rather limited (see Simmons and Elkins 2004; Meseguer 2005; Dobbin, Simmons and Garrett 2007). While it may have a good account of how ideas travel, it certainly has less to offer on the re-interpretations and the contextual adaptations that mark the diffusion process.

10 A shared contextual feature is the commitment of all three governments to some loose tenets of the so-called Third Way. The Third Way has been defined by both its proponents and its detractors, in particular in the voluminous contributions of New Labour's critics (e.g., Bevir 2000; Fairclough 2000; Heffernan 2001; Jordan 2010). Those critics have taken issues with the reliance of Third Way rhetoric on allegedly sinister practices of political marketing, spin and focus-grouped policy concepts, as well as with its its moralizing tendency. What unites proponents and detractors in their analysis is the *in-between* place of the Third Way. Where "the Right does not have the answer to the problems of social polarization, rising crime, failing education and low productivity and growth" (Blair 1998, 2), the "fundamentalist Left [and its] belief that the state could replace civil society and thereby advance freedom fails equally" (ibid., 4). Chirac locates his political platform beyond "left- or right-wing objectives" (quoted in Emmanuelli and Frémontier 2002, para. 2). See also the joint manifesto by Blair and Schröder (2003).

While this may be a rare moment of frankness about such considerations, we need to be open to the strategic benefits of the rhetorical inventiveness that is characteristic of how community cohesion, *cohésion sociale* and *Bürgergesellschaft* were defined.

This interest in strategy is not meant to suggest that the rhetoric of cohesion needs to be understood as window-dressing, or that its strategic deployments should (always) be considered as somehow inauthentic. It means that we must consider the introduction of cohesion in the context of constellations of political actors, competing for advantageous positions and rhetorical openings to define a political programme and outmanoeuvre opponents (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Hyde 2011). The definition of social orientations, as much as it may reflect genuine beliefs and normative commitments, equally responds to competitive pressures and should be understood as an act of political marketing. Gregor McLennan and Tom Osborne (2003, 61) make this point succinctly:

> 'Marketing' is ... not something to be dismissed by critical sociologists, rather it is our bread and butter: how people develop ideas in relation to their most relevant publics, and how they advertise their values in doing so, is constitutive of, not supplementary to, the meanings and plausibility of the ideas 'themselves'.

In following this interest in the framing of ideas and the operations of political language this project, in a very loose sense, is discourse analytical. It follows the suggestion that the operations of political language matter in how concepts are coined, problems are defined and strategies are devised. In trying to understand these operations in three different country contexts, it aims to make three specific contributions to the critical study of social cohesion.

- The debates where cohesion is defined and contested – for its conceptions of society and for how social unity is at risk – take place in particular national contexts.[11] In elucidating some of the parameters of these debates and addressing the way in which society becomes an object of political contestation, the thesis contributes to the understanding of how public, media and intellectual exchanges on social cohesion operate within such environments. Considering problematisations of social unity in particular fields, the welfare state,

11 Although the impact of supranational institutions in the diffusion of policy language cannot be discounted and will be acknowledged where relevant.

citizenship and post-immigration 'difference', the thesis furthermore promises to provide a fuller understanding of the respective shapes of the politics of cohesion.

- Regarding manifestations of social cohesion across country contexts, scholarly attention has so far not been focused on public debates and political agendas where social disintegration is presented as a problem and social cohesion is introduced as an objective. Admittedly, this study cannot provide more than a snapshot of each country case, where it investigates socio-economic, civic and cultural problematisations of cohesion respectively. By considering different arenas of social discourse and problematisations of social unity, the study nonetheless promises to provide some insights into similarities and differences in how social cohesion is conceived across national contexts.

- For this purpose the thesis develops a toolkit that aspires to be of some theoretical and critical sophistication. It suggests a starting point for the critique of social cohesion. The critical concern of this thesis promises to make a significant contribution to our understanding of why we may want to either become or remain suspicious of how concerns with cohesion have recently informed public policy making across Western European states.

These objectives stand against a background of changing political and social currents. In some sense, the moment of cohesion is over, and the three agendas investigated here are all things of the past. At this conjuncture, when society is newly imagined and defined either in extension of the politics of austerity, as a compensation or, rarely, in opposition, this concern with the past may turn out to be useful to understand the present (Hall 2011; Massey 2011). The thesis does not claim to engage with the present moment in much systematic order or analytical depth. However, it suggests that society remains a particular and powerful site for the definition of political objectives. To engage with the politics of the moment, we need to consider the imaginary efforts that inform understandings of society and political priorities.

Chapter 1: The imagination of society

Introduction

In an investigation into the historiography of antiquity, Randolph Starn (1975, 7) points to the appeal of the theme of decline. In the presence of random data, decline is readily drawn upon to organize historical experiences, and to chart out trajectories and a sense of sequence.[12] Decline is a construction, for

> no one directly perceives the 'falling away or down from' of states, cultures, economies, or of any other historical collectivity. The 'perception' is a generalization, analogy, or judgment; even in Jericho only the walls, not the state, came tumbling down. If we may speak and think of 'falling away from' in history, it is at least in part because a term such as 'decline' allows the random and concrete to be organized and may formalize a sense of different degrees and moments.

While decline has been appealing across time and national traditions of historiography, the theme of dissolution has been considered as being characteristic of the experience of cultural modernity. In an extensive examination of dimensions of this experience, Marshall Berman (1983) takes the first chapter of the Communist Manifesto as his starting point. The "bourgeois epoch", Marx and Engels famously suggested, was distinguished from all earlier epochs by

> [c]onstant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation. … All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. (Marx and Engels [1848]2002)

Berman (1983, 15) suggests that this account informs the modern experience of a "paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity: it puts us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish". Literature, poetry, modernist architecture and modern sensibilities, Berman suggests, are steeped in and reflect the cultural experience of dissolution and constant change.

How decline and dissolution are open to being used and embellished in political language is some way beyond the scope of this investigation. Arguably, however, both

12 Such as *The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Gibbon 1994[1776]); the *The Decline of the West* (Spengler 1926); or Arnold Toynbee's (1948) account of the cyclical rise and fall of civilisations. Toynbee (1948, 13) points to a "regular pattern of social disintegration" that is repeated in the "schism of the disintegrating society into a recalcitrant proletariat and a dominant minority" (ibid).

have a special place in political and cultural commentary. They underpin the recent success of television productions and best-selling non-fiction titles across Europe. In Britain, titles read *The Abolition of Britain* (Hitchens 2008), *The Day Britain died* (Marr 2000) or *After Britain* (Nairn 2000). Thilo Sarrazin's (Sarrazin 2010) book *Deutschland schafft sich ab* (Germany does away with itself) tapped into a sense of decline, postulated a biologistic account of the higher reproduction rates of people marked as of inferior intelligence (notably Muslims) and became the best-seller of recent decades.[13] This appeal to anxieties about the socio-cultural fracturing of some romantically idealized notion of the *Volksgemeinschaft* has some precedents in German political discourse. In France, narratives of decline have been similarly successful in capturing the imagination, but tend to refer to the loss of cultural *grandeur* and international standing as well as to the decline of republican solidarity. Nicolas Bavarez's (2003) *La France qui tombe* has offered an account that is powerfully substantiated by the commemoration of the years of post-war prosperity, *les trente glorieuses* (Fourastié 1979), which were seen to have come to an end in the late 1970s.

A similar sense of decline seems to underpin newly reinforced concerns with social ties. A long-standing vocabulary of social integration and disintegration has become newly salient. This is most visibly expressed in the prominence of concerns in political discourse, such as the Danish *sammenhængskraften* (Peters 2010), the Dutch *sociale samenhang*, the German *gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt*, or the French concern with its *liens sociaux*. The disintegration of society has become, as the following chapters illustrate, an increasingly relevant topic of political discourse.

In surveying references to political dissolution in the UK, Arthur Aughey (2010) identifies a pervasive sense of "endism". Endism, for Aughey (2010, 27), works with the dramatization of decline and dissolution in a way that is "discursively inventive, historically debatable and (as yet) politically unproven". Political processes are prejudged, such as in relation to British devolution where the "*becoming* of separation is bound up in the *is* of devolution" (Aughey 2007, 142). Propositions of decline, he suggests, should be taken with a grain of salt as their narratives neither give realistic accounts of actual political, constitutional and socio-economic challenges, nor usually offer convincing grounds for predictions of national dissolution or social fragmentation.

13 At the time of writing Sarrazin's book is in its 14th edition (see Garton Ash 2011)

What exactly it is that is at risk of dissolution is, more often than not, unclear. While pressures on government and its institutions have been conceptualized as instances of 'governmental overload' or 'ungovernability' (see Mayntz 1993), it is difficult to imagine what it would mean, with Hobbes, for a modern Western state to "perish from internal diseases". Institutional deadlock in countries such as Belgium, or the pressures of recent debt crises in Greece or Ireland, indicates potentially severe challenges to the continuation of certain kinds of financial, federal or administrative arrangements. Arguably, however, these pressures do not quite correspond to the existential experience of dystopian decline – leading to all-out civil war – that Hobbes' 'dissolution of the Commonwealth' seems to signify or that the notion of 'endism' invokes.

It is arguably even less clear what *social* disintegration, as a matter of actual social processes, might be seen to imply. Presumably, the disintegration of society means not the absence of social relations altogether (which would be better understood as solitude than as disintegration), but the decline of certain types of relations, which would be superseded by new and different kinds of social ties. A literalist understanding of disintegration that conflates symbolic invocations with material processes is bound to be confused.[14] Languages of disintegration need to be understood as metaphorical in nature (Wrong 1994, 3-4) and, as we have pointed out before, disintegration and decline provide horizons for interpretation.

This conception of disintegration should not make us mistake imagination for a flight of fantasy or an inwardly-oriented construction of subjective experience. Social disintegration is usually introduced in political rhetoric in reference to tangible social problems. As collectively shared meaning, it is of considerable significance for how political problems are constructed. Just as the historiography of decline gives a sense of sequence to historical events, the political metaphor of social disintegration serves to organize the perception of social problems and may give politics a purpose. This purpose, this chapter suggests, is underpinned by imaginations of disintegration and cohesion, which account for a sense of urgency and immediacy in the politics of cohesion.

14 Critical questions that H.L.A. Hart (1967) put to Patrick Devlin in relation to the possibility of an empirical test for the so-called 'disintegration thesis' are particularly instructive in this regard (see Chapter 2).

This chapter introduces a framework for the interpretive challenges of making sense of these imaginary components of cohesion. This framework has to navigate between two positions. In governmentality studies, changing representations of 'the social' are considered with an interest in *longue durée* changes of governmental techniques and with a relative disinterest in the dynamics of agenda-setting and actual political speech. The emphasis in interpretative policy analysis on agendas, concepts, rhetoric and speech acts, by contrast, may be at risk of failing to account for the role of representations of 'the social' and for how such representations are of relevance for understanding public policy initiatives. There is a risk in failing to consider background conditions of political change, such as of the role that imaginations of social relations play in the construction of policy problems. Our framework, very much tailored for the purpose of addressing the 'turn to cohesion', aims for the middle-ground. It proposes to be neither exclusively stuck in the minutiae of particular speech, nor to be too aloof from the political framing of social relations. This chapter develops this middle ground for the purpose of the contextual reconstruction of political agendas of cohesion in three countries.

We consider, first, how 'the social' has been introduced and conceptualized as a domain of concerns and how, more specifically, the recent prominence of social-integrationist and moral-communalist concern is situated in this tradition. Second, we consider how society has been conceived as an inherently problematic space of forces and trajectories. Third, we draw a connection between such understandings of the social to the construction of social problems as it has been conceived in interpretive and constructivist policy analysis. We fourthly suggest that the policy-analytic interest in problem construction needs to be supplemented with an interest in the background conditions of social problems, that is, with social imaginaries. Social imaginaries have been conceived differently, and we draw on aspects of the work of Cornelius Castoriadis, Charles Taylor and Ernesto Laclau for relevant suggestions on how the imagination of society may be usefully understood for policy-analytic purposes. We conclude with suggestions on how social imaginaries should be considered and studied in interpretive policy analysis.

The invention of the social

Society is conventionally considered as a domain that encompasses heterogeneous material. When 'the social' is invoked politically it often refers to various needs and concerns that are predicated on particular perspectives on the social forces and understandings of the normativity inherent in society. In this sense the social is a "problematic unity" (Dean 2010, 682) in at least three ways. First, it is seen to encompass diverse and problematic needs that are of concern and need to be catered for by government or through mechanisms of societal self-regulation. Secondly, the concern with social needs is usually underpinned by a concern for the integration of society at large. Lastly, the conceptual unity of society is loose and often disputed. Its understanding is problematic in the sense that the conception of society itself has been politically contested in modernity. Such contestations are of concern, since depending on how the unity of the social is conceived, different types of concern are foregrounded and different understandings of social regulation, public policy intervention, or welfare provision, are perceived as necessary or desirable. With social cohesion as a newly prominent perspective on society, we have suggested that there are two kinds of concern – integrationism and homogeneity – that have become significant in this regard. We will locate such understandings within a brief overview of how society and the social have been thematized.

Only in the 19th century, Jacques Donzelot (1980; 1994) and Robert Castel (1995) suggest, was 'the social' discovered as a domain of concerns. Giles Deleuze (1980, ix), in relation to this "rise of the social", points to its "beginning in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, [how] it sketches out its own originality in relation to older sectors, so that it is able to react on them and effect a new distribution of their functions."[15] Paul Hirst (1981, 68), reviewing Donzelot's (1980) work, observes:

> His point is that the 'social' is the product, the coming together of a series of innovative interventions directed toward particular social evils. The 'social' realm is an *arteface*t, conditional on the appearance of certain forms of social organisation and certain objectives: mass education, the supervision of 'private'

15 Denise Riley (1988, 49) describes another useful characterisation of the beginnings of 'the social' as follows: "The nineteenth-century 'social' is the reiterated sum of progressive philanthropies, theories of class, of poverty, of degeneration; studies of the domestic lives of workers, their housing, hygiene, morality, mortality; of their exploitation, or their need for protection, as this bore on their family lives too. It is a blurred ground between the old public and private; voiced as a field for intervention, love, and reform by socialists, conservatives, radicals, liberals, and feminists in their different and conjoined ways."

> conducts in childrearing and health, public health measures, and attempts to eliminate pauperism.

Tasks that had previously been conceived as either pertaining to the domain of family affairs or as falling under the realm of the self-administration of estates and guilds, or as requiring the benign intervention of churches or philanthropic elites, were now subsumed under governmental concern. New logics of social administration were developed, notably ones that were aimed at the minimisation of social risks, of insurance and the provision of material security (see in particular Ewald 1993 for a genealogy of such logics).

Jacques Donzelot and Robert Castel link this discovery of the social to historical junctures that required new practices of administration. Donzelot (1994, 18) locates the discovery of *faire du social* at the moment when the Enlightenment ideals of French republicanism were confronted with democratic mass society, specifically in the upheaval of 1848, when new demands for social equality were articulated and had to be catered for by government. This occurred against the background of industrialisation where, with mass poverty and its consequences, a 'social question' was discovered and new types of social administration were introduced (Castel 1995). Moreover, the notion of popular sovereignty and the ideal, if not the practice, of democracy brought about a new concern for popular demands. Such ideals – and the gradual movement towards extending the franchise in the 19th and early 20th century – were at odds with a reality where the formulaic empowerment of democratic subjects had little to offer to a working class that faced everyday economic insecurity. The invention of society thus occurred when various rights and needs were discovered, defined as social, and targeted as such by various professions and subjected to new logics of regulation and the minimisation of risks.

Such inventions, we have suggested before, did not bring about a consolidated and undisputed understanding of society. Instead, they marked the beginnings of a consideration of 'the social' as a site for analytical discoveries and as a domain for political intervention. Mitchell Dean (1999, 54) suggests that "the notion of society is never static or conclusively fixed" and that we should think of it as something that is "always already waiting to be discovered":

> It was discovered and rediscovered: by philanthropists and social workers in the causes and effects of poverty; by doctors in the correlation between living

> conditions and mortality and morbidity rates; by educationalists in the attributes appropriate to the properly socialized citizen, by social economists in the ill-effects of political economy… (ibid.)

Nikolas Rose (1999, 468) notes how the social, rather than being "invented by political thought" was

> assembled out of the work of a plethora of practical empiricists – doctors, urban planners, sewage engineers, statisticians and the like – in the eighteenth and nineteenth century: the result of their work made it necessary for political thought to take a 'social' point of view.

This points to the role of professions that define their mission – not merely against the background of empirically identifiable needs – but in line with particular conceptions of their role and their professional conduct. 'The social', it is safe to say, was not just discovered in theory but in the practice of fields such as philanthropy, social hygiene and criminal justice.

But the contrast between theory and practice in such innovations should not be overstated. After all, "[i]deas always come into history wrapped up in certain practices, even if these are only discursive practices" (Taylor 2004, 33):

> what we see in human history is ranges of human practices that are both at once, that is, material practices carried out by human beings in space and time, and very often coercively maintained, and at the same time, self-conceptions, modes of understanding. (Taylor 2004, 29)

Charles Taylor, in a contribution that will be of more concern to us later, directs us to both. He suggests that new understandings of society came to imbue a new 'social imaginary', a mode of self-understanding that was at the same time informing practice and informed by it. In relation to the social, the recognition was that "organized society is no longer equivalent to the polity; other dimensions of social existence are seen as having their own forms and integrity" (2004, 76). Taylor points in particular to the perspective on society as an economic organisation, as "an interlocking set of activities of production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamic" (ibid.). This new objectification of society, Taylor suggest, is accompanied by a different conception that attributes to society a sense of agency.

> On one side, we become capable of imagining new free, horizontal modes of collective agency, and hence of entering into and creating such agency because they are now in our repertoire. One the other, we become capable of objectifying society as a system of norm-dependent processes, in some way analogous to

> those in nature. On the one hand, society is a field of common agency, on the other a terrain to be mapped, synoptically represented, analyzed, perhaps preparatory to being acted on from outside by enlightened administrators. (Taylor 2004, 164)

Those two modes of imagining society, as a terrain of social forces and one of collective agency, point to a certain conceptual tension, which has become central for modern understandings 'the social'.[16]

The 'invention' of society, its discovery as a field of previously unrecognized forces, added further dimensions to an existing concern with order. It also provided for a new appreciation for the self-stabilising forces inherent in society, an appreciation that was frequently brought out through metaphorical conceptions of society as an organism or a body with the capacity for self-healing. In this context, the impact of mass society on moral life, health and psychological sanity of individual persons – and the challenges posed by atomisation and the declining force of tradition – were among the tasks taken up in the beginnings of the disciplines of sociology and psychology. Both contributed new conceptual vocabularies for social pathologies – such as anomie (Durkheim 1952[1897]), alienation (Marx 1977[1844]), or neurosis (Freud) – that tie the concern with social order and its moral foundations to the possibility of a good life in society.

In the context of this new concern with social relations, two alternative orientations can be discerned. One is more instrumentalist and follows the social-integrationist perspective that we have sketched out in relation to Durkheim; the other one is closer to substantialist understandings of moral character development. The former is exemplified by Tocqueville (1945[1835]) and his suggestion that individuals' readiness to participate in the institutions and associations of collective life positively impacts on the quality of society, economic performance, and the functioning of the political system. Such arguments have recently been resurgent in the neo-Tocquevillean contributions of social capital scholars. Robert Putnam (2000, 19) suggests that "embedded in a dense network of reciprocal social relations" individuals generate the kind of social lubricant that facilitates transactions on all levels. The decline of associational life in Western democracies, Putnam argues, is a tragedy not only in and by itself, but because of its negative impact on democratic quality, the quality of

16 This has informed a concern with the increasing bureaucratisation of social life and with a 'life-world' that is colonized by impersonal forces, notably market forces and administrative rationalities (Habermas 1981).

institutions, and a wide range of public goods. Public policies towards social integration, inasmuch as they are concerned with substantive policy problems caused by declining social capital, should advocate and promote civil society engagement.

The substantialist perspective, on the other hand, has been prominently endorsed in various forms of communitarian theory and frequently draws on Hegel's (1942[1842]) ideas regarding the necessity of inter-subjective relationships of recognition for ethical life and moral character development. Robert Bellah (1985) points to such connections between character and society and, for the case of the United States, raises the problem of a society "in which the individual can only rarely and with difficulty understand himself and his activities as interrelated in morally meaningful ways with those of other, different Americans" (1985, 50). His comments are broadly in line with the communitarian critique of liberalism for how it fails to recognize the social and cultural embeddedness of individuals, as well as the accordant value of undistorted cultural backgrounds for personal moral development: "the liberal self reflects the fragmentation of liberal society" (Walzer 1990, 21). Attaining the good life thus requires an appreciation of the ties that bind, of collective cultures and the quality of social relations. Where the social integrationist perspective emphasizes the positive side-effects of social integration for the quality of public life, the latter perspective speaks predominantly of moral development. Human beings, understood as "encumbered selves" (Sandel 1984) rather than socially free-floating, are contextually situated. The quality of their social and cultural environment determines their opportunities to attain the good life.

We have already suggested that such understandings may coincide in political rhetoric. Tony Blair, whose rhetoric we study in some detail in Chapter 5, was variously credited with being both 'communitarian' and 'social capitalist' (Hale 2002; 2006), and New Labour's political rhetoric certainly provides sufficient examples for both interpretations. Jacques Chirac's invocation of *fracture sociale* – see Chapter 3 – oscillated between the lamentation of lost morality and policy prescriptions that were profoundly in line with the social integrationist paradigm. Equally, the development of *Bürgergesellschaft* in Germany drew on concerns over a sense of lost togetherness – a loss that was prominently expressed with the commemoration of previous expressions of solidarity in the history of the Federal Republic, such as of the ethos of post-war reconstruction of the *Wirtschaftswunder* years. These symbolic portrayals of the

German collective as a community of fate (*Schicksalsgemeinschaft*) not only coincided with but were actively used to promote strategies towards social activation and new integrationist commitments in labour market and welfare reform. The conception of social unity as sustained through collective activity can, and in political debate frequently does, draw on both integrationist and substantialist ideals.

Since the invocation of society in political speech, we have suggested before, is part of strategic efforts of political positioning, it is not surprising that various types of concern are articulated and invoked, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes separately, depending on contextual exigencies and on the appeal of the two themes distinguished above in particular situations. Both themes, however, are available to support expressions of concern about social unity and provide formulae for the problematisations of society. The act of problematisation should thus be understood as the foregrounding of particular conditions and trajectories – obviously at the expense of others. We discuss problematisation here as an act of interpretation.

The problems of the social

Michel Foucault (1997, 118) usefully considers problematisation as a 'work of thought'. The study of problematisations asks

> what has made possible the transformations of the difficulties and obstacles of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions. It is problematization that responds to these difficulties but by doing something quite other than expressing them or manifesting them: in connection with them, it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt to respond to.[17]

The problematisation of society would thus need to be understood as the attempt of arranging an object so that it becomes amenable to particular kinds of intervention. Before we consider the problematisation of social cohesion, we turn to recent conceptions of society that should be of concern for they the amount to an ultimate problematisation by invoking the 'death' of the social.

The new currency of a social rhetoric stands in a somewhat curious relation to the purported decline of its subject, as it has been invoked since the 1980s. Margaret Thatcher famously declared there was 'no such thing as society', though she

17 See Thomas Lemke (2011) for a compelling overview of Foucault's writings on critique.

subsequently complained about misunderstandings: "My meaning …was that society was not an abstraction, separate from the men and women who composed it, but a living structure of individuals, families, neighbours and voluntary associations" (Thatcher 1993, 626). Mitchell Dean notes how the comment, quite in line with Thatcher's later complaint, did not mark a "decisive break". With its understanding of society as a "living structure" it merely articulated a "now barely contestable proposal": "society is regarded less as a source of needs … and more as a source of energies contained within individuals' exercise of freedom and self-responsibility" (Dean 1999, 152). Accordingly, Thatcher's invocation of society should be seen as aligned with "theorists of social capital, who emphasize levels of trust and civic participation, or the advocates of 'communitarianism', who seek to 'reaffirm shared values'" (ibid.). The disavowal of society as a domain of needs, and a new focus on the potentials for self-regulation that it contains, does not in this understanding signal the demise of society, but rather a new emphasis towards the two kinds of concern that we have sketched out previously.

Arguably, the understanding of society, not as 'a source of needs', but as a container of social forces that need to be calibrated and mobilized, precedes the 1980s and 1990s. After all, social integrationism is no novelty and the welfare state – be it of Bismarckian or Beveridgean provenance – has always entailed an account not merely of needs, but also particular normative understandings of society, family life, or gender relations. Moreover, regarding the second kind of concern, the interest in how individuals are socio-culturally rooted has not just begun with the more recent prominence of 'communitarianism'. Dean and others, however, rightly suggest that since the 1980s the reference to new understandings of social mobility, activity and responsibility has been heard more frequently and has, with the salience of ideas of social capital and communitarianism, become newly relevant in politics. Stephan Lessenich (2006b, 614) suggests this goes hand in hand with the "re-interpretation of socio-structural into behavioural-psychological problems, the systematic inversion of collective and individual responsibilities, the rampant remoralisation of questions of social inequality."[18]

18 Nikolas Rose (1996, 228) considers these developments as leading towards the 'death of the social': "the object 'society', in the sense that began to be accorded to it in the nineteenth century … has ... begun to lose its self-evidence". "[D]espite the undoubted persistence of the theme of society and social cohesion in contemporary political argument, 'the social' in the sense in which it has been understood for about a century is none the less undergoing a mutation" (ibid., 230). It is in particular the identification of 'community' as a new domain of governmental concern that

The re-interpretation of problems along these lines begs some questions as to how problematisation works. The shift in emphasis from concerns with social structure towards individual and collective behaviour arguably indicates a salient movement, and the following seeks to develop some insights on how this movement has materialized in the formulation of political concerns.

Social problems

Problem construction has been a concern in constructivist and interpretive policy analysis, as well as for social theorists concerned with the conceptual structure of social thought (see Osborne 2003). Among constructivist policy analysts there seems to be a consensus that problems should be considered as somewhat less-than-real. While they may refer to actual and empirically identifiable grievances, it is not the case that just any grievance comes to be perceived as a problem. Problems usually undergo a career, are subject to invocations and creative embellishment. They emerge from a state of latency and are brought towards increasing visibility and, if successfully introduced and made visible, may be used to describe a particular condition or situation as problematic.[19] This career is usually accompanied by political pressures of agents advocating on behalf of such definitions. It may also draw on scientific innovation where new findings are introduced to highlight risks of conditions or behaviours that may previously have been considered unproblematic.

There is some dispute over the degree of ontological reality a policy problem should be accorded. Anthony Downs, for example, states that "objective conditions regarding the

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makes Rose come to this conclusion. However, there may be a certain British bias in his account, since the invocation of community is not quite mirrored in policy contexts outside of the United Kingdom. More importantly, however, and not only in relation to Rose's suggestion, we may want to avoid the notion of an era when 'the social' was somehow authentically articulated, unproblematically conceived as pertaining to 'needs', and not already infused with normative understanding of moving forces within society. The modern welfare state in its various shapes is not exempt from such understandings and not merely grounded on a neutral estimation of social rights or needs – something that Rose would probably acknowledge. Gøsta Esping-Andersen (1990, 23) says as much when he suggests that even in modern arrangements the welfare state is an "active force in the ordering of social relations" and that "state activities are interlocked with the market's and the family's role in social provision" (ibid., 21). Where the novelty of post-war welfare provision is that it introduced new ideals of security (and these seem to be what is 'dying') , it was for example decidedly biased towards a particular understanding of industrial work and towards the gendered division of productive and reproductive labour.

19 Accordingly, a number of valuable studies into the career of policy problems offer thick descriptions of their emergence. Pfohl (1977) and Nelson (1984) describe the pre-history of how child abuse has been discovered as a 'social problem'. Gusfield (1984) explores the construction of 'drink-driving' and offers a detailed picture of the background conditions, cultural sensitivities and scientific consensus that allowed for this particular problem to capture the imagination

problem are far worse during the pre-problem stage than they are by the time the public becomes interested in it" (Downs 1972, 39). Thus, while Downs appears to distinguish between the reality of a problem – measured by the severity of grievances it causes – and its place on the policy agenda that is determined by the support it can draw on, other commentators abandon objectivity when accounting for problems (see Schneider 1985). The large number of conditions that could conceivably be defined as problematic – but aren't – should make us at least consider the process of problem definition with the same interpretive interests that, we have suggested, the notion of cohesion requires.

Commentators have offered sophisticated models, such as Downs' (1972) 'issue-attention cycle,' models of 'alternative specification' (Kingdon 1984), or 'framing' to account for the first steps in the career of a policy item (see Dearing and Rogers 1996). The prior step, however, the *discovery* of problematic conditions that underpin such policy items is frequently treated as unproblematic. However, the transition of an issue from a "pre-problem stage" (Downs 1972, 39) to becoming a full-blown policy problem frequently appears intricate to retrace, and poses some aggravating questions about the ontological status of 'policy problems' (see Landry 1995). Critical accounts of the emergence of 'social problems' offer some clues in this regard. Since the 1970s, a number of commentators (notably Blumer 1971; Spector and Kitsuse 1973; Gusfield 1984) have attempted to account for how conditions, previously perceived as unproblematic, come to be perceived as 'social problems,' and thus emerge as a concern for government. Blumer (1971, 302) offers a model that emphasises processes of 'societal recognition' of grievances, struggles over legitimacy and mobilization of action that turns a situation into a social problem. Spector and Kitsuse (1973, 147) similarly highlight the dynamics of issue-raising, i.e. the conditions under which an instance may be defined as "offensive, harmful, and otherwise undesirable" and the process in which this definition comes to be accepted by a wider public.

Donald Schön (1979, 261) puts the interpretive challenge vis-à-vis social problems as follows: "Problems are not given. They are constructed by human beings in their attempts to make sense of complex and troubling situations." While Schön highlights the role of problem generation with an interest in metaphors, "underlying the stories which generate problem setting and set the direction of problem solving" (Schön 1979, 255), Bruno Jobert (1992) considers the role of social interpretations in the construction of public policy problems: "[T]he pertinence of a social definition depends on its

capacity to insert itself into the referential model that renders society intelligible and which is at the basis of its processes of legitimation" (Jobert 1992, 220).

Deborah Stone points to the role of narratives and, in particular, 'images' in the construction of policy problems: "Problem definition is a process of image making, where the images have to do fundamentally with attributing cause, blame, and responsibility" (1989, 282). Struggles over causal stories, according to Stone, involve the "manipulation of *images* of conditions by competing political actors" (1989, 299). In order to garner support for a policy proposal, and in order to prevail in political debate, it is frequently not only the interpretation of a set of uncontested facts, but the very sequence of events and, accordingly, questions of cause and responsibility that are contested. Murray Edelman adds to this line of interest and illustrates how problem definition needs to be considered as an attempt to shape the "contours of a social world" (Edelman 1988, 13). Accordingly, "[t]he 'career' of an explanation of a problem manifestly hinges in part on the acceptability of the ideological premise it implies" (Edelman 1987, 12). Without prior imaginative efforts it remains unclear how new policy problems arise. As regards social cohesion, new images of society had to be established for it to connote and bundle an area of policy concern.

Social problems are not mere reflections of social conditions out there; they do not merely arise as an expression of theoretical innovation and of newly acquired knowledge of society. The discovery of problems and their articulation in political discourse involves the construction of fitting imaginaries. This is what Murray Edelman (1988, 13) refers to when he asserts that the definition of policy problems shapes the "contours of the social world". To account for the pertinence of a policy problems, it would, then, be necessary to consider not only how a covert issue could garner the support of powerful interests and thus become policy-relevant. Rather, the emergence of a configuration of social problems, such as the one that social cohesion addresses, occurs in a process of re-labelling and re-description. Phenomena, whose problematic status was already widely acknowledged – such as civic apathy, urban unrest, criminality, claiming benefits – were subsequently attributed to a lack of cohesion.

It seems necessary, then, to extend the concern with problem construction to cover the construction of problem images and, more broadly, to consider the imagination of problematic conditions and how these imaginaries provide the backgrounds against

which individual policy issues become salient and appear urgent. Regarding the problem of social cohesion, problematic conditions are embellished and audiences may be captured by compelling images that offer an account of obstacles and solutions. Interpretive policy analysis therefore faces the challenge of considering how such images become plausible and compelling, but are also perceived as matters of urgency and immediacy. The following suggests that work on social imaginaries usefully responds to these challenges.

Social imaginaries

Arjun Appadurai (1996, 31), pointing to new international entanglements between states and spheres of cultural production, suggests that the "imagination is now central to all forms of agency, is itself a social fact, and is the key component of the new global order". This time horizon appears a little dubious as, at least in relation to society, imagination has been at work for a long time. How society was invented as a domain of concerns, and how factual and normative understandings of the social were introduced, gives evidence of the significance of such imaginary understandings of society. The previous section has considered in particular how policy problems draw on such background understandings. With 'social imaginaries', the following introduces a perspective to understand this background and its relevance in the politics of cohesion.[20] It introduces the work of Charles Taylor, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Ernesto Laclau on imaginaries and suggests that their respective accounts constitute useful resources for studying the politics of cohesion, in particular because their accounts accentuate different aspects and therefore complement one another.[21]

Charles Taylor on imaginary building blocks

Charles Taylor (2002; 2004), we have suggested previously, considers social imaginaries as modes of understanding a modern social order that inform and are informed by social practices.[22] He offers some specific ideas on what he considers the building blocks of a modern imaginary. Imaginaries, for Taylor, refer to the "ways

20 The notion of 'social imaginary' is at home in French cultural studies. See, for example, Gilbert Durand (1973).

21 Parts of the following have been published in *Critical Policy Studies* (Dobbernack 2010)

22 Charles Taylor's (2004) *Modern Social Imaginaries* has been fully incorporated into his more recent tome *A Secular Age* (2007). As we are not concerned here with Taylor's intriguing theorisation of secularism we draw exclusively on the 2004 book. All page references in this section refer to this book.

people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations" (23). They are thus both descriptive and evaluative and unite a sense of "how things usually go" (24) with expectations regarding social regularities and rightful demands. They may build on theoretical innovation. Crucially, however, they become effective in practice:

> people take up, improvise, or are inducted into new practices. … [A] new understanding comes to be accessible to the participants in a way it wasn't before. It begins to define the contours of their world and can eventually come to count as the taken-for-granted shape of things, too obvious to mention. (29)

Taylor highlights four features of the imaginary of modern liberal-democratic order. The economy, the public sphere, popular sovereignty, and rights. Rather than a mere imagination of capitalist modes of production and exchange, the imaginary of 'the economy' constitutes a way of seeing society as "an interlocking set of activities, production, exchange, and consumption, which form a system with its own laws and its own dynamic" (76). This understanding "defines a way we are linked together, a sphere of coexistence that in principle could suffice to itself, if only disorder and conflict didn't threaten" (76). Second, Taylor points to the public sphere, as an "extrapolitical, secular, metatopical space" (99), a space in which "rational views are elaborated that should guide government" (89). Drawing on studies by Habermas (1989) and Warner (1990), Taylor notes that this innovation of thinking of society fundamentally challenged older notions of order. It involved a "breach in the old ideal of a social order undivided by conflict and difference. On the contrary, it means that debate breaks out, and continues, involving in principle everybody, and this is perfectly legitimate" (90-1). A third innovation is the rise of notions of popular sovereignty, mostly, as Taylor contends for the case of the United States, by way of a "retrospective reinterpretation" (112). A "backward-looking legitimacy idea" provided a new reading of history through which new claims for equality and participation could be articulated. Fourthly, he draws attention to the discovery of rights. Those entered the stage as an "expression of our modern idea of a moral order underlying the political, which the political has to respect" (173).

These modes of understanding became and as Taylor contends remain efficient not least by channelling new demands and expectations. Images of democracy provide a sense for what can be demanded of a political system (deliberation, elections). Images of the

law equip subjects, as rights-bearing individuals, with a horizon of how they expect to be treated by agents of the state and by one another. Order conveys, among other meanings, the idea of civility in everyday interactions. The understanding of society as an economy, we have already suggested, offered a new understanding of inherent social forces and how these may be administered. Such images are constitutive not only of our cognitive horizon, but of the types of practices – for example political participation, recourse to justice, everyday civility – that have become available in modernity.

The modern imaginary, Taylor contends, is constituted by those elements. They form our collective horizon and amount to

> the lineaments of our understanding of moral order in contemporary liberal democracies. The way we imagine our social life is articulated in these forms. The society in which we live is not just the political structured order; we also belong to civil society. We are linked in an economy, can seek access to a public sphere, and move in a world of independent associations. (143)

Taylor does not conceive of the transition from theoretical innovation to new practices in a strictly mechanical way (29, 33, 115). In fact, this seems to occur as a part of processes of sense-making in which actors adopt new practices by drawing on new theories that become plausible against the background of new social imaginaries. The relationship between theory, imaginary, and practice is not – and, for Taylor, cannot be – spelt out in an abstract form. It only appears open to be studied in its actual historical manifestations.

Significantly, there appears to be considerable contingency in how available repertories and structures of meaning can be drawn on and mobilised for new purposes. What "starts as a mere census category may be mobilized into common agency [whereas] previously existing agencies can lapse into mere passive categories" (170). Such changes, reflecting the emergence and demise of certain types of imaginaries, are not theorized by Taylor. His study is not concerned with the actual practices of articulation through which new imaginaries may be instituted. As regards the *longue durée* that Taylor is concerned with, this might be the most appropriate form of investigation. However, in relation to a more delimited interest in how social imaginaries inform political debate, Taylor's bird's-eye perspective is clearly insufficient.

Cornelius Castoriadis on creative autonomy

For Cornelius Castoriadis, social imaginaries are not merely images of something; they are not there "in order to represent something else". By contrast, they are "the organizing patterns that are the conditions for the representability of everything that the society can give to itself" (Castoriadis 1987, 142).[23] In turn, the particular challenges facing a polity at a given time stand in relation to such representations: "problems, presenting themselves to a particular epoch or a particular society as a task to be completed, [can be understood] only in relation to an imaginary central to the given epoch or society" (133).

The mode in which meaning is given in the social-historical world is by way of symbolic relationships. Institutions constitute "symbolic networks" in which signifiers are brought in relation with signified: law, for example, is connected to norms and commands; money connotes value (117). Such symbolic networks are by definition unstable and susceptible to reassemblage. Indeed, they are "built on the ruins of earlier symbolic edifices and use their materials" (121). Accordingly, due to "virtually unlimited natural and historical connections, the signifier always goes beyond a strict attachment to a precise signified and can lead to completely unexpected realms" (121). Thus, one of the most significant tenets of Castoriadis' theory is that meaning exceeds functionality. The way the social world is imbued with meaning cannot be explained by the functional requirements of structural components. The determinants of structure are in fact representations themselves. They are the result of meaning-making activity and, following Castoriadis, they are deluded inasmuch as they purport to provide complete knowledge of the social world. The questions that arise across social and historical contexts, and the way they are addressed, defy structuralist analyses that can only account for (imagined) functionalities within (imagined) conceptions of system or structure. The ordering of the social-historical world, however, produces reflections on collective identities, on historical missions, on collective values and beliefs that do not fit into preconceived schemes of this kind.[24]

23 Page numbers in the following refer to Castoriadis's (1987) *The Imaginary Institution of Society*.

24 This is of particular relevance for questions of revolutionary agency as they were conventionally conceived in Marxist-Leninist orthodoxy. Castoriadis suggests that such agency is not only misunderstood but inhibited by an orthodox structuralism that anticipates trajectories and outcomes (see also Kalyvas 1998; Comité Invisible 2007). However, this is not only a quarrel with orthodox Marxism, but with different varieties of structuralist theory. Castoriadis offers a strong critique of such types of theory and in particularly attacks the way it posits an essentially lifeless

Castoriadis' work on the social imaginary is part of his critical reflection on Marxist theory and the rejection of the determinism of its orthodox forms (40). Against historical materialism, and against the hubris of theory that claims to all-knowingly account for the totality of social relations, Castoriadis aims to reintroduce the instability of meaning and the imperfection of knowledge. While knowledge of the social world, in a Marxist tradition, can either be true, an objectively accurate account of social laws and relations, or false, a result of alienation and false consciousness, Castoriadis (184) rejects such claims as profoundly absurd and politically reactionary: the factor of human creativity that continually leads to the "emergence of radical otherness, immanent creation, non-trivial novelty" needs to be taken into account. Significantly, however, the emphasis on creation does not mean that creative potentials and autonomous meaning-making reign supreme. 'Social rules,' 'objects' and 'forms' in society may develop a life of their own and may be – in fact, most commonly are – instituted in a way that is not conducive to human autonomy. This is when the instituted imaginary obtains a life of its own, becomes autonomous and infringes upon the potential of human beings to create meaning (129).

This emphasis on creative autonomy is Castoriadis' (77) point of departure for his attempt to redraft a revolutionary project that places significance on the appropriation of the social imaginary. The social imaginary oscillates between "given structures, 'materialized' institutions and works […]; and, on the other hand, *that which* structures, institutes, materializes" (108, emphasis in original); that is, between human activity and sedimented meaning, between acts of institution and the prevalence of the instituted. Accordingly, Castoriadis' work supplies a critical yardstick for the measurement of social representations according to their conduciveness for agency, creativity and freedom.

Such emphases have not been uncontested.[25] For our purpose, however, it is the contingency, creativity and critical edge of Castoriadis' account that make it a

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system of mechanical connections. These, he suggests, are abstractions that do nothing to elucidate the horizons of our socio-historical existence (Castoriadis 1987, 120).

25 There has been some criticism of Castoriadis for his overemphasis of creativity and autonomy. Iannis Stavrakakis (2007, 57) points to Castoriadis' reliance on "a primordial source of human creativity associated, in certain respects, with the pre-symbolic psychic monad." Moreover, the emphasis on creativity seems problematic at a time when creativity itself may be seen as "something like 'fashion', the endless repetition of permanent change under conditions of permanent imitation – production for the sake of production, 'ideas' for the sake of 'ideas' – and something which ultimately, perhaps precisely because of its character as a sort of compulsory

worthwhile contribution. Contingency means that there is no iron cage in relation to how society is imagined. Particular imaginations are creative investments that could have been imagined differently.

Ernesto Laclau on dislocation and democracy

As for Castoriadis, the possibility for the democratisation of collective representations is a concern for Ernesto Laclau. Laclau's account of social imaginaries is woven into a comprehensive post-structuralist approach that can only be insufficiently revisited here. A main part of this approach is the impossibility to bring signifier and signified into a state of reconciliation. Identity, the congruence of both, can never be conclusively established. Identities and subject positions, once they have been carved out, remain unstable and conflictual. The same holds for society, its images and definitions that only exist "as an effort to construct that impossible object" (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 112), reflecting the "impossibility of a final suture" (Laclau 1990, 125). Recurrent attempts to fix meaning in hegemonic projects, by establishing nodal points in discourse, or by proposing signifiers that subsume wide sectors of the social world are thus ubiquitous, but ultimately incomplete as the indeterminacy of the social world cannot be surmounted. In the space between meaning-making attempts and the impossibility to conclusively fix meaning, Laclau locates 'myth' and 'social imaginary'.

When structures of meaning become dislocated, new spaces emerge: "[d]islocation is the source of freedom", Laclau argues (1990, 60), resonating with Castoriadis on the interplay of 'institution' and 'the instituted'. In situations of dislocation, subjects can put forward new descriptions that stand in antagonistic relationships to dominant objectivities. Such descriptions, in Laclau's account, are *myths*. "The mythical space is presented as an alternative to the logical form of the dominant structural discourse" (1990, 62). The content of myth entails the "intuition of fullness that cannot be granted by the reality of the present" (1990, 63). Thus, myth is a space where demands can be articulated and related to forms of desirable social life. When myth is inscribed with fullness, it becomes an imaginary – a "horizon … [that] structures a field of intelligibility" (1990, 64).

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heterodoxy, has conservative effects" (Osborne 2003, 512). There is a debate to be had, then, whether the strong focus on autonomy and creativity provides the critical purchase that Castoriadis envisages; or whether it is at risk of reaffirming a newly hegemonic understanding of creativity that is characteristic of a "new spirit of capitalism" (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a); see Chapter 2 for a discussion.

The elevation of myth into an imaginary is treated briefly in Laclau's earlier work and he, at that point, bracketed a number of considerations that appear to have obtained a more prominent place in his later writings (see Glynos and Stavrakakis 2003; Stavrakakis 2007, ch. 2). It is particularly the question of what it is that makes a social imaginary more than a background picture of a factual or normative kind, but a project that agents are invested in, 'gripped' by and derive pleasure from that has been added to Laclau's perspective. Jason Glynos, in this context, has suggested that Laclau's work could benefit from a more systematic consideration of *fantasy*. In order to understand the 'grip' of ideological projects he proposes a concern for how the imaginary "pull[s] off this trick whereby it sustains its emptiness and simultaneously promises fullness" (Glynos 2001, 198). Together with David Howarth (2007, 147), he goes on to elaborate that

> fantasy operates so as to conceal or close off the radical contingency of social relations. It does this through a fantasmatic narrative or logic that promises a fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome […] or which foretells of disaster if the obstacle proves insurmountable […].

Thus, the operation of fantasy consists in reaching out and tying together a sense of fullness, the promise of future social harmony, to scenarios of social decline and collapse. The promise of fullness relates to the feeling that 'things fall apart' but that, through the operation of public policy and the adoption of strategies of social management, they can be put together again. The way these connections are drawn and acquire a sense of naturality accounts for the strength of the social imaginary and its 'grip'.

The study of social cohesion as a 'social imaginary' points to linkages and discursive operations that exceed the immediate semantic content of the concept. Cohesion, depending on how it is invoked, exhibits certain imaginary properties that may amplify its potency. Such properties include what Ernesto Laclau refers to as the "intuition of fullness that cannot be granted by the reality of the present" (Laclau 1990, 63; see also Laclau and Mouffe 2001, ch. 3; and Laclau 2005, 71). Cohesion, frequently, alludes to apocalyptic scenarios of social disintegration that are tied to utopian ideas of a wholesome, peaceful and harmonious social life. Policy claims that are inserted into this 'imaginary horizon' of fullness and catastrophe acquire a sense of urgency. Highlighting this "ideological moment" (Glynos 2001, 195) of cohesion may help us to understand the way it appears to require, naturally and urgently, practices of social activation.

Social Imaginaries and Interpretive Policy Analysis

The analysis of the development of agendas of cohesion in the subsequent three chapters follows interpretive interests that may benefit from a consideration of social imaginaries – without slavishly following either of the perspectives introduced above. We may consider cohesion for dimensions of fantasy, be they utopian or dystopian; for conceptions and normative understandings of 'the social'; and for the kind of background understandings of society against which social problems become available. The question remains how such dimensions of the imaginary may be considered in the examination of social cohesion on political agendas. For this purpose, we will outline three policy-analytic orientations that correspond to the contributions of Taylor, Castoriadis and Laclau and that inform the concern with a reconstructive examination of the politics of cohesion in this thesis.

Meaning

Following Taylor's suggestions, the conceptual invention of cohesion may be studied as the production of new social understandings. Indeed, it is conspicuous how notions of cohesion have been coined and applied in contexts where there was little or no precedent. Cohesion was invented, and traditions in social theory were drawn on, mobilized and re-described for the purpose of this invention. In fact, while *cohésion sociale* looks back on occasional policy invocations in French post-war history, British community cohesion and German *Bürgergesellschaft* are, in the way they were defined in the time-frame that concerns us here, conceptual novelties. Their creation and consolidation can be studied in media discourses, speeches and policy documents over time. Moreover, the way the invocation of such notions serves to delimit new fields of concern and new areas of policy intervention is open to textual investigation. Taylor (2004, 170) points to how imaginaries come about: what "starts as a mere census category may be mobilized into common agency". He draws attention to how social meaning emerges and provides the background for social practices and understandings that appear 'too obvious to mention'.

Critique

Castoriadis' perspective suggests a possible starting point for the critique of cohesion. Social cohesion, following Castoriadis, can be considered as an *instituted horizon*. The way in which cohesion is invoked as a positive vision that not only governmental actors

but also various problematic populations are required to subscribe to, seems to correspond to this critique of how social meaning is imposed. The requirements that cohesion introduces towards marginalized populations require critical interrogation. A sense of this imposition is reinforced by the degree of indignation that is frequently directed at those who challenge the conceptual framework of cohesion in favour of alternative problem accounts or visions of society. Castoriadis' critique, with its reliance on creative agency, certainly appears somewhat romantic for how it subscribes to an ideal of self-determination in the construction of social meaning. Rather than concerning ourselves with the possibilities of how this meaning may be constructed, the following pays some attention to instances where collective agency – and the democratic appropriation of 'the social' – can be seen to provide a counterpoint to social imaginaries in the politics of cohesion.

Fantasy

The democratic re-appropriation of 'the social' is also a key concern of Ernesto Laclau. Crucially, however, he adds an interest in affective operations of the social imaginary. To account for the 'grip' of social cohesion we may use his perspective, and how it has been developed in particular by Glynos and Howarth (2007), to point to the 'fantasmatic logic' of its social imaginary. We are interested in the way in which 'fullness' and 'catastrophe' coincide and in how this coincidence substantiates public policy proposals. The urgency with which policies towards cohesion are introduced and rhetorically supported can be explored by way of studying policy documents, by re-capitulating how incidents and social trends are reported and by considering political speech.

Interpretive approaches in policy analysis have in fact responded to similar concerns with meaning, critique and fantasy. Various suggestions have been made in recent years to move analyses 'beyond empiricism' and towards a consideration of the role of meaning (see Fischer 1998; 2003 for valuable overviews). Much of this new interest has been directed at deliberation, argumentation, rhetoric and political speech. Alan Finlayson (2006, 547), for example, usefully points to the role of rhetoric in "creating concepts, terms and images through which we first grasp a situation, or a problem, before we start to argue over it". Herbert Gottweis (2007, 245) suggests that "words not only matter because they signify but also because they perform, shape, create, and

transform policy-making dynamics". There is, of course, a certain difficulty in the consideration of rhetoric and policy discourses, given their transitory nature. Concepts, such as cohesion, are being introduced, substantiated in theory and practice, and fade away once their content has been exhausted, their political purpose achieved, or their meaning internalized to an extent that invoking the notion has become unnecessary. The rhetoric of cohesion has salience at particular points but, with changing political priorities, can be and has been superseded by different types of political rhetoric.

In relation to the development of a particular policy idea, we may, then, distinguish between moments of introduction, argumentation, sedimentation and abandonment. In relation to the politics of cohesion, we are particularly interested in the early stages of its development and introduction. Given that our interest is in how society was conceived with social cohesion, and how such imaginations have been developed and introduced for particular political purposes, we will prioritise creation over argumentation and development over abandonment. This bias is not intended to suggest that it is insignificant to study political argumentation or to pay attention to how previously powerful policy concepts fade away and disappear. However, our primary concern will be to provide a contextually informed reconstruction of the development political agendas of cohesion.

Finally, it may be necessary to briefly consider perspectives that conceive of such developments in purely mechanical and strategic terms. With their work on 'vehicular ideas', Tom Osborne and Gregor McLennan have made some intriguing suggestions for such purposes. Vehicular ideas, among which Osborne and McLennan count the 'Third Way' or 'multiculturalism', are concepts with loosely defined meaning and broad appeal to constituencies. They "emerge as ways of problem-solving and 'moving things on'" (McLennan 2004, 485). They have 'something' of a principled commitment, but are essentially "resistant to theorization in any rigorous sense. […] Rather, they serve as inclusive umbrellas under which quite a range of advocates can shelter, trade and shift their alignments and allegiances" (ibid). In this sense 'vehicular ideas' embody the kind of intellectual activity that is appropriate to a conception of the world as "an ever-modernising one, one in which things do not keep still, and one in which it is a good moral and political quality to be able to shift one's sense of values and organisational practice" (McLennan and Osborne 2003, 53-4). They are "not merely observations of what is here today or even coming tomorrow; they are notions which can disrupt and

distend reality, which announce ethical norms and deviations, strivings for now and strivings forever" (ibid, 63).

There is a certain mechanistic bias in McLennan's and Osborne's account. To understand the vehicularity of an idea or policy concept, one surely would need to account for what it is that makes passengers want to travel with the idea, as well as what it is that makes a concept such as cohesion sufficiently gripping and evocative to be attractive to both users and recipients of cohesion discourse. This is where fantasy – what Glynos and Howarth (2007) suggest in their concern with 'fantasmatic logics' – needs to be taken on board to understand the appeal of cohesion and its social imaginary.

Conclusion

Social imaginaries are a loose conceptual tool. They serve to highlight background understandings of society that inform the definition of social problems and the adoption of governmental practices for their remedy. They may be used to shed light on how connections are drawn between desirable and undesirable conditions of society, between 'fullness' and 'catastrophe', and to explore how such links underscore the urgency of policy proposals. Following Castoriadis and the intellectual tradition of 'radical democracy', they can even be applied as critical yardsticks to measure the extent to which social meaning is imposed, or emerges as a result of collective democratic agency and meaning-making.

Nuances of meaning in how society is conceived – such as the distinction between substantialist and integrationist conceptions of social unity – need to be considered. However, although notions may be conceptually distinct, it is necessary to engage with the meaning that concepts acquire when they are deployed in political language. For the examination of this language, the concern of social imaginaries does not prejudge methodological decisions, but allows for a variety of critical and interpretive angles. The difficult role that cohesion plays in recent policy agendas points to the need for a multi-pronged approach to understand how fluid concepts might become profoundly important for practices of social regulation and governance. The concern with social imaginaries allows for this and, in line with the orientations and perspectives outlined in this chapter, highlights elements that are important to consider.

Among these are, first, *strategic considerations*, since the framing of society in public policy discourse is usually the result of political considerations about strategic benefits. One of such benefits, we have suggested here, is the definition of *social problems*, which provides for openings and allows political actors to appropriate and own political agendas. The salience of social problems in the politics of cohesion, moreover, points to certain *imaginary qualities*. Social disintegration is frequently invoked and contrasted with visions of cohesiveness, and this juxtaposition might account for a sense of urgency that policy prescriptions acquire. Finally, conceptions of social imaginaries point to some of the groundwork that is needed for a *critical perspective* on cohesion. The following chapter develops this critical perspective in more detail. It examines the requirement of activity that characterizes the politics of cohesion.

Chapter 2: The active society

Introduction

In how society is accounted for, and how pertinent social problems have been conceived, the reference to social activity has become as widespread as the one to cohesion.[26] In public policy design, as well as in the burgeoning academic literature on the social governance of modern states, activity now is a prevalent theme. Critical analyses have sought to catch up. Mitchell Dean (1995, 569) observes "the displacement of the ethos of the welfare state with that of the 'active society'". Stephan Lessenich (2008) offers an account of how the welfare state is replaced by the *Aktivgesellschaft*, a process that – he suggests – is accompanied by a "reinvention of the social". In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005a) suggest that the capacity for activity has become a core criterion in the determination of human worth. Understandings of activity, the role of activity in new conceptions of social governance, and the political objective of activation have been variously explored. More rarely have they been examined for the social imaginaries that underpin the new emphasis on social activity. This chapter offers a contribution towards understanding some the suppositions of this new emphasis. It suggests that new conceptions of society, such as those that were articulated in the politics of cohesion, have been a vehicle for the push towards activation.

Janet Newman (2007, 364) suggests that "activation forms a condensate through which contemporary governance trends can be analysed". Problematically, however, understandings of governance and the reality of 'activation' instruments in public policy are characterised by considerable diversity; a myriad of processes and practices are addressed with a single formula. There is a risk, Newman (ibid.) suggests, of losing out on "important differences in the forms of power and authority that are deployed" where activation is considered as the paradigm of contemporary social governance. Accordingly, this chapter suggests that the new interest in activity and prescriptions towards activation are indeterminate propositions that derive contextual meaning when

26 Amitai Etzioni prominently developed a sociological theory for *The Active Society* (Etzioni 1968; McWilliams 2006). Etzioni did not refer to the much more recent phenomenon of activation instruments in public policy. He proposes a sociological theory for the "postmodern period" and to consider "*the active quality* [in how] societies or sub-societies (ethnic groupings, classes) acquire varying degrees of self-control" (1968, vii, emphasis added).

particular social problems are addressed. Among civic, socio-cultural or socio-economic domains of concern, diverse accounts of the activity that such domains are seen to require have been proposed. Since different conceptions of social activity have been proposed in areas as diverse political participation, community relations or labour-market and welfare politics, it will be necessary to discuss what it is that unites propositions towards the active society across these domains.

While some point to differences between national trajectories towards activation (see Serrano Pascual 2004; Bonoli 2010), others see a considerable convergence of instruments and strategies (see Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008). The notion of activation, introduced as a remedy to various social pathologies, has been brought into the picture for the purposes of labour market and welfare-state reform since the late 1970s (Dean 1995; Walters 1997). Consolidated in more recent proposals, an emphasis on consumer choice in public service provision and the introduction of 'back-to-work' policies are particularly characteristic of these measures (Lessenich 2005; Bonoli 2008; Bonvin 2008; Eichhorst, Kaufmann and Konle-Seidl 2008; Van Berkel and Borghi 2008).

The prominence of the theme in public policy design is mirrored in new orientations in political science, notably in a turn to 'governance'. There is a growing literature on how complex societies require social subjects to be or become active when faced with new challenges and in situations where previous modes of political steering are seen to have failed. In recent years, 'meta-governance', 'network governance', 'empowerment' or 'nudging' are just a few of the propositions that have been developed along these lines. To be sure, activity – often presented as an invitation – is not merely considered to be a matter of individual choice. It increasingly becomes a requirement, such as when the receipt of benefits is made conditional on activity: a trend that is discernible across Western European polities (Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl 2008). Increasingly, activity underpins social policies that seek to mobilize populations and that are prepared to introduce penalties incurred by those that are considered to be insufficiently active or whose activity is considered insufficient or undesirable. Hence, it is a legitimate concern to consider how requirements for activity match capacities to be active. If the dispositions and lifestyles of already-active groups in society are generalized and inform a general framework of expectations for measuring those that are less fortunate and able, it seems appropriate to point out the bias and injustice of activation measures.

Cohesion and activity are frequently introduced in the same breath and in order to outline new and allegedly more appropriate notions of state activity. Eichhorst and Konle-Seidl (2008, 6) see a strong connection between the two ideas:

> Through improving access to work or subsidised work opportunities, activation strategies can help strengthen societal cohesion and alleviate potential tensions between tax payers and benefit recipients. This implies a re-orientation of social citizenship, away from freedom of want towards freedom to act while continuing to guarantee a socio-economic minimum standard.

Indeed, the turn towards activation has been theorized as part of a reconfiguration of national models of social solidarity towards more 'liberal' or 'libertarian' ideas (Hvinden and Halvorsen 2001). However, the notion that cohesion and activity are mutually dependent, for example that social solidarity requires an ethos of public engagement or republican commitment, clearly does not need to be substantiated by liberal ideas or neoliberal ideology. The Council of Europe (2004a, 12), in a chapter entitled 'social cohesion as a responsibility for all' of its *Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion*, introduces the two themes as follows:

> A society is cohesive when people accept responsibility for one another. The values of present-day European society are not always conducive to this. Thus, an exclusive stress on the rights of the individual cannot form a sufficient basis for social cohesion. Individual rights will be best protected in societies where people feel a shared responsibility for the rights and welfare of all.

It is not self-reliance that is emphasised here but ideas about mutual responsibilities, obligations and collective commitments. The rejection of 'rights' and the emphasis on obligations may be reminiscent of how liberal reformers point towards alternatives to the welfare state. The Council of Europe, however, seems to have a broader understanding. Collective activity provides for social integration, but the vision of society that is sketched out is one where mutual obligations, and not self-reliance, substitute the functions of welfare state provision. In how this new emphasis on activity may be achieved, the *Revised Strategy for Social Cohesion* suggests that

> various changes in concepts and methods of governance imply a move away from the omnicompetent State to new concepts of governance through partnership, or government as a form of contract between citizens and the State. (Council of Europe 2004a, 9)

It may not be necessary to decide whether the various ways of how activation and social governance are considered are reducible to the same trajectory. For the purpose of this investigation, it is sufficient to acknowledge that the recent prominence of ideas about

new social governance, and the role that activity plays in these, are increasingly connected to concerns with social cohesion. As part of a "conventional wisdom" in contemporary urban governance, Ian Gordon and Nick Buck (2005, 6) point to the "repeated reference to the imperatives of (economic) competitiveness, (social) cohesion and (responsive) governance". While such relationships between social cohesion and social activity are frequently drawn, this chapter considers the nature of the rapport and how it is established.

This chapter first provides a historical backdrop on contemporary debates on activation and considers those in relation to dilemmas of social regulation in liberal political theory. Secondly, it examines in some detail the political logic of ideas of activation, in particular in welfare and labour market reform. Thirdly, it focuses on how in the literature on 'governance', society is conceived as in danger of fragmentation. Such conceptions usually underpin the suggestion that it has become necessary to go beyond 'conventional' or 'old' forms of governmental control, which are purportedly inadequate to regulate society when it is conceived as fragmented, complex and multi-layered. This 'governance turn' is of interest for how it supports new types of political steering that rely on the activation theme. Fourthly, the chapter points towards possibilities for a critique of social activation and uses the occasion for some more general comments on the critical impetus of the thesis. It concludes with suggestions on the study of social activation in the politics of cohesion.

The chapter makes three interrelated suggestions. The activation theme is *indeterminate*; it can take more than one shape. In the politics of cohesion, it supports different kinds of propositions, such as towards political participation, flexibility in the labour market, the 'active' contribution of welfare recipients, or even the stipulation that communities need to become connected or 'vibrant' to overcome significant social problems. Activation is *compelling* for how it is substantiated by an emphasis on newly perfectionist subjectivities and by ideals of self-management and self-reliance. This emphasis has the potential to create new *hierarchies*, where empirical variations between social groups and individuals to conform to ideals of self-managed activity meet a reality where it is almost always those that are less able to meet such demands that became the target of activation measures.

Liberalism and the 'societal interest'

Contemporary ideas on how the attainment of social goods requires certain types of individual conduct, such as in the current concern to activate the unemployed, arise against a background of persistent interest. The concern with aggregate effects of individual behaviour and its statistical measurement, we have suggested previously, emerged in the 18th and 19th century and has ever since been met by cautionary tales, notably in liberal political theory. Famously, John Stuart Mill (2011), addressing the 'tyranny of the majority', considers situations when not only acts of government but the 'mandates of society' may become oppressive. He considers social tyranny to be more severe than tyranny by government, since the former "leaves fewer means of escape, penetrating much more deeply into the details of life, and enslaving the soul itself" (2011, 8). Mill has in particular the force of "prevailing opinions" (2011, 60) in mind that needs to be limited. To maintain such limitation is "as indispensable to a good condition of human affairs as protection against political despotism" (2011, 9). Part of our rightful expectations as free individuals, he suggests, is that we have the licence to frame "the plan of our life to suit our own character" (2011, 23).

Such pursuits, as is well-known, are limited by the harm principle: as "soon as any part of a person's conduct affects prejudicially the interests of others, society has jurisdiction over it" (2011, 142). Mill is cognizant of the fuzziness of the harm principle when it refers not to harm suffered individually, but to behaviour that is harmful to what is defined as the 'societal interest'. He goes to some length to expose what he considers shady and illegitimate requests that may be put forward in the name of the greater social good. Regarding Mill and others (e.g., Tocqueville 1863, Ch. 15), the problem with the mandates of society, with the requirements of liberty or with the nature and scope of the societal interest is, of course, that such understandings are historically fluid.[27] They respond to social and historical understandings that have frequently been revised.

Mill's classical liberalism, for example, would generally not be seen to be equipped to deal with the conditions of freedom in post-industrial mass societies. Poverty, different from how Mill saw it, is not usually understood as an accident, misadventure, or as

27 Nikolas Rose (1999, xviii) gives a very broad sketch of how such understandings have shifted over time. He sees "a shift from a conception of the human being as a moral subject of habit, to that of the normal subject of character and constitution in the second half of the nineteenth century, to the social subject of solidarity and citizenship rights in the first half of the twentieth century, to the autonomous subject of choice and self-realization as the twentieth century drew to a close."

resulting from character flaws; it is conceived as a social phenomenon. The socio-economic situation where vast numbers are unable to live up the ideal of self-supporting autonomy – for reasons that have themselves proven to be contested – has put liberalism to a test. It arguably led to the fragmentation of liberal politics. In libertarianism, as it has became particularly influential in the United States (e.g., Hayek 1944; Nozick 1974), a strong emphasis on autonomy is qualified by the stipulation that once an individual draws material support from society, his or her conduct are of social concern beyond Mill's boundaries of non-interference. Coercive measures may be adopted in the interest of society as well as in the rational self-interest towards self-reliance that individuals are seen to have.[28] Liberals of a different type have been concerned with the material conditions of autonomy and their absence for vast numbers. This has led to the proposition of various types of social reform programmes to provide for social security or to address individual traits that were considered to stand in the way of the exercise of autonomy.[29] It has been suggested that political liberalism has never been as averse to moral regulation as Mill envisaged it (see Hunt 1999).

The 'mandates of society' or the 'societal interest' can be considered quite differently, even from within a liberal orientation. It may be seen to require the self-protection of society against the self-inflicted heteronomy of "welfare scroungers", or – in particular where assumptions of guilt are questioned – as requiring the creation of material conditions that make freedom a possibility. Historically, the 'social question' of mass poverty, as it was discovered in the 19th century, led to a re-calibration of concerns with freedom and social regulation (Castel 1995). It brought about new social points of view. Whereas individual capacities were at the heart of classical liberalism, new perspectives took sight of aggregate behaviour and its statistical measurement. Populations were beginning to be conceived in the 19th century as exhibiting features that were of interest not merely as a reflection of individual conduct, but as properties of a 'social body'. The governmental concern with the aggregate effects of individual behaviour, what Foucault (2004a) theorizes as 'biopolitics', brought about a new interest in lifestyle choices. The invention of society in the 19th century, as discussed in the previous chapter, saw an

28 This is exemplified in the logic of the British workhouse. In the workhouse benefits for material survival were granted under the condition that recipients handed themselves over to conditions of forced labour (Fowler 2008). The decline of the workhouse and the revision of the British Poor Laws occurred when a more nuanced perception on poverty, and how it needed to be managed by means of collective welfare provision, emerged in the late 19th and early 20th century.

29 See King (1999) on dilemmas of liberalism in social policy-making and Freeden (1996) on nuances, political expressions and contradictions of political liberalism.

explosion of the number of social professions and of social practitioners. New kinds of rationalities were introduced in how individual conduct needed to be administered. Social problems were viewed not in relation to individual choices, but for the aggregate effects of such choices.[30]

In practice, this shift put into doubt the liberal disavowal of moral regulation (although this disavowal may never have been as strong a selling point for political liberalism as its preference for property rights and entrepreneurial freedom has been). John Stuart Mill's (2011, 155) commitment to principled non-interference extended to obnoxious conduct, such as to drunkenness in public: "No person ought to be punished simply for being drunk". In fact, "gambling, or drunkenness, or incontinence, or idleness, or uncleanliness" – all those types of activity "which experience has shown not to be useful or suitable to any person's individuality" (2011, 152) – shouldn't be subject to censure by authorities for their "extravagance" (2011, 154). They only give reason for interference for their negative externalities, such as the "breach of duty to family or creditors" (ibid.). Notions such as 'negative externality' are already firmly rooted in a particularly modern perspective on aggregate effects in society. By conceiving of individual conduct with a view to such effects, the liberal equation changed, not least for how conduct, such as drunkenness, would be evaluated and by what standards. The impact of cumulative behaviour – whether 'obnoxious' or not – on social integration became a new concern.

There has been a variety of debates in which liberal arguments have faced ideas about the 'societal interest'. The following section is merely concerned to consider some elements of such conflicts in relation to questions about social integration or cohesion. In Britain, for example, the 1957 report of the Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offences and Prostitution (the Wolfenden Report) was the occasion for exchanges between theorists and social practitioners that are of interest in this regard.[31] Intellectual

30 Francois Éwald (1993, 24) puts this convincingly in his groundbreaking work on social prevention and insurance: "As pathologies are not manifested in individuals but in the relationships among individuals, they cannot be combated by assigning individual guilt. … Nobody can claim to struggle on his or her own against pathologies whose existence depends on others. And everybody, with a view to his or her own well-being, has to respect and want those things that society describes as the conditions of general welfare."

31 The committee included amongst others the Principal of University College Wales, Aberystwyth, Goronwy Rees, who was considered its most liberal voice. Maybe characteristically for his time, this did not stop Rees from accusing his old friend, Guy Burgess, who had defected to the USSR, of "depraved tastes" for his homosexuality (Higgins 1996; see also Rees 2000, 40).

debates that accompanied the work of the Committee were concerned not just with sexual identities and practices, but with the more general social effects of allegedly immoral or obnoxious conduct on society. Characteristically, homosexuality was lumped together with prostitution, and even the social effects of drunkenness were discussed analogously. Different from Mill, Patrick Devlin considered these effects as follows: "suppose a quarter or a half of the population got drunk every night, what sort of society would it be? You cannot set a theoretical limit to the number of people who can get drunk before society is entitled to legislate against drunkenness" (Devlin 1965, 37). Arguing for the need to regulate alcohol consumption, Devlin made a more general case for the social regulation of individual conduct, based on the observation that "[t]here is disintegration when no common morality is observed and history shows that the loosening of moral bonds is often the first stage of disintegration" (Devlin 1968, 7).

H.L.A. Hart responded critically to the connections that Devlin drew between social integration and conceptions of social morality. He identified, first, a 'classical thesis' on the relationship between a unitary conception of morality and social unity, associated with Plato and Aristotle. On this account, the law is there "for the promotion of moral virtue" (Hart 1967, 1). Moral virtue, in turn, is seen to reflect unchangeable truths about the good life whose realization and pursuit provides for a solid foundation of society.[32] From the 'classical thesis' Hart distinguished the 'disintegration thesis', which he associated with Devlin. Devlin, Hart suggested, recognized that morality was transitory, rather than unitary and static. He was not committed to the preservation of eternal truths, Hart pointed out, but to the role that prevalent norms play for social integration. Morality, Hart (ibid.) characterized Devlin's position, figures

> as the cement of society, the bond, or one of the bonds, without which man would not cohere in society. … It is not the quality of morality but its cohesive power which matters. … The case for the enforcement of morality on this view is that its maintenance is necessary to prevent the disintegration of society.

Hart's quarrel was about Devlin's inability to supply proof for the 'disintegration thesis'. Absent this proof, ideas of disintegration needed to be considered as "disguised tautologies … depending entirely on the meaning given to the expressions 'society,' 'existence,' or 'continued existence' of society" (ibid, 3). Until "psychologists and

32 The classical thesis, of course, has remaining defenders, such as Gertrude Himmelfarb (1995, 11) who pours scorn on the "the assumptions that all moral ideas are subjective and relative, that they are mere customs and conventions, that they have a purely instrumental, utilitarian purpose, and that they are peculiar to specific individuals and societies."

sociologists provide such evidence, supporters of the enforcement of morality would do better to rest their case candidly on the conservative rather than on the disintegration thesis" (ibid, 13).[33]

Hart's request for proof appears reasonable enough.[34] Nonetheless, we want to sidestep such questions and consider the 'disintegration thesis' and its political manifestations as metaphorical in nature. Even where it is tautological, the "meaning given to the expressions 'society,' 'existence,' or 'continued existence' of society" (ibid, 3) is essential to consider not for how it reflects truths, but for the role that these understandings play in the formulation of political programmes (such as for how the Wolfenden Report impacted on the Sexual Offences Act 1967 that decriminalized homosexuality between men). The types of governmental regulation that are considered legitimate and appropriate are usually substantiated by social imaginaries. The new focus on social activation has to be considered for its conceptions of society and of the societal interest. The following section, hence, considers dilemmas and debates where the 'societal interest' is newly defined in relation to the alleged inactivity of individuals and social groups.

Social activation in politics

The idea that activation has to play a privileged role in welfare and labour market reform was introduced in the 1970s. It was conceived in response to the recognition of a new constellation of social problems and, in particular, to what French sociologists have considered as the emergence of a 'new social question' (Castel 1995; Rosanvallon 1995). This question refers to puzzlement, beginning in the 1970s, about how and why the post-war social economy had failed to redeem its original promise of universal prosperity, full employment and social security. With the decline of industrial production, the primary labour market seemed increasingly unable to absorb

33 As a variation of the 'disintegration thesis', Hart introduces the 'conservative thesis'. It describes "the claim that society has a right to enforce its morality by law because the majority have the right to follow their own moral convictions that their moral environment is a thing of value to be defended from change" (ibid., 2). Hart remarks, the 'disintegration thesis', if it is not supported by substantial proof, collapses into the 'conservative thesis', which is grounded in principled majoritarianism. See also Dworkin (1966).

34 His puzzlement about the 'disintegration thesis' corresponds to Michael Mann's (1970, 432) sociological quarrel with 'normative consensus' theory. Consensus sociologists tend to assert "that some 'minimum' level of consensus about certain 'critical' value is necessary to social cohesion. As this level is never precisely specified, we cannot very easily come to grips with the argument" (Mann 1970, 432).

populations (Bonoli 2007). Systems of social protection were seen to have failed in as much as they were built on the idea that everybody – or at least the primary, male breadwinners – would find a place in the labour market. New populations on the margins of society were brought into view as victims of social dislocations and as proof for the failure of old modes of social solidarity. The measures that were proposed for the 'inclusion' of these marginalized populations would differ significantly from what had been envisaged as part of the post-war welfare state arrangements; the activation of unemployed and welfare recipients began to be introduced as an alternative to previous systems of social protection.[35]

Giuliano Bonoli (2010, 443) elaborates on this and provides a useful periodisation of 'active labour-market policies'. For the labour shortages of the 1950s and 60s, the objective of activating interventions was the 'upskilling' of the labour force. Following the economic crises of the 1970s and in the context not of shortage, but of unemployment, the objective became occupation. Since the mid-1990s the goal of policies has been to encourage the "reentry of unemployed persons and other non-working individuals into the labor market" (ibid.). Following this latest transformation, which Bonoli (2010, 448-450) considers as the 'activation turn', activity has become widely conceived as a remedy to a variety of problems. Not just re-entry into the labour market, but civic participation, relations between ethnic majority and minorities were conceived as problems that required solutions parallel to the political instruments designed to increase labour market participation.

There are considerable differences in how socio-economic problems have been conceived and remedies of activation applied. In France, a new interest in *exclusion sociale* made the integration of marginalized populations, living under conditions of *precarité*, a particular concern. In the United States, 'new poverty' became the concern of a line of 'dependency' thinking. Lawrence Mead (2006, 110) pointed to so-called 'cultures of poverty' and suggested that the "greatest cause of today's poverty may simply be that the attempts […] to equalize opportunity have failed to persuade many blacks and Hispanics that it is worth working." Anti-dependency politics generally put emphasis on cultural attributes of populations on the social margins (Dean and Taylor-Gooby 1992), and suggests that there is a need to "animate society" (Mead 2006, 115).

35 Chapter 3 elaborates on the French context of these developments in more detail.

The development of workfare politics follows a similar argumentation, but is not in all circumstances concerned with the cultural attributes of welfare recipients (Handler 2004). Britain has followed the US precedent, though in its New Labour years the focus on obligations that is characteristic of workfare politics has been accompanied by the concern to increase social investment (Taylor-Gooby 2008). With the *Hartz* reforms of 2003-2005, parallel strategies of social activation have been implemented in the redesign of German systems of social protection.

While these examples point to a certain convergence towards activation, national policy traditions remain significant to consider. Different orientations towards the social position of unemployed or marginalized populations have been developed across national policy-making contexts, and the meaning of activation as a political strategy towards new social problems appears fairly contextual. Even within labour market reform, activation is an ambiguous proposition for the variety of tools used and objectives pursued. Despite this ambiguity, the proposition of activity certainly exhibits a certain 'vehicular' pull for how, maybe because of this ambiguity, it can "act as focal points of political agreement" (Bolini 2010, 450-1).

While the current turn towards activation in public policy design is celebrated by some, others remain sceptical not only of the relevant administrative practices but of very notion of activity and empowerment. Activation has been criticized for how it involves "opening up more of the person to governmental power, requiring them to collaborate in the development of new subjective orientations to the worlds of work and welfare" (Newman 2007, 366). The dispositions of welfare recipients and unemployed persons are brought into a domain of governmental concern, such as when social entitlements are made "contingent upon the individual's conduct, responsibilities and compliance with obligations" (Van Berkel and Borghi 2008, 398).

The new governance of activation may be characterised by a mixture of elements: the emphasis on consumer-choice and empowerment; democracy; 'empowerment'; as well as new and reinforced sanctions. Van Berkel and Borghi (2008, 399) see this mixture reflected in a tension between 'new governance' and 'activation policy': "whereas the former emphasises the voice and choice that policy users should have in service provision processes, the latter emphasises the obligations and individual responsibilities of unemployed persons in activation, which reduces rather than enhances their active

involvement in service provision". In activation strategies, Newman (2007, 371) suggests, citizens are conceived as "partners" and "consumers", but also as "the object of coercive strategies". There may be overlaps and tensions in "different instantiations of the 'active' citizen" (ibid.).

Activity, just as cohesion, is a theme that is given specificity and meaning in the contexts of its invocation. As an abstract notion, it is no more than a loose suggestion that where inactivity is the problem, activity is the solution. The 'active society' is, William Walters (1997, 224) suggests almost tautologically, an "argument [that] holds that the best way for governments and other agencies to address social problems is through the promotion of 'activity'." Eichhorst *et al.* (2008, 2) point to the appeal of the idea of activation:

> At first sight, activation is a compellingly simple idea. For people of working age, doing something useful – especially working – is much better than sitting out time on a public benefit, however generous or meagre it may be. This is certainly desirable for better social cohesion, solidarity and the long-term viability of welfare states and public budgets. It is probably this straight-forward normative idea that is responsible for the widespread appeal and success of policy measures introduced under the label of activation.

In current public policy proposals, the suggestion usually is that the interference of activation strategies, though it should not be taken lightly, is in the rational self-interest of inactive populations and thus appropriate. When individual immobility is considered to be the cause of social problems and a burden on public finances, the societal interest in pursuing activating interventions becomes a compelling proposition. Since the lack of activity is also seen to stand in the way of individual self-realization, the governmental interest in activation seems in line with a conception of human desires and aspirations.

While such calculations do not differ significantly from the dilemmas already identified by Mill, their context appears to have changed. Liberal ideas of self-reliance have been newly emphasized and seem to inform newly perfectionist conceptions of human behaviour. The current British reform agenda with its emphasis on benefits conditionality and activation is exemplary in this regard. In a recent statement titled '21st Century Welfare' (Department of Work and Pensions 2010), Iain Duncan Smith, Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, emphasizes that "problems are interrelated and their solutions lie in society as a whole" (ibid., 1). A "culture of worklessness and dependency" needs to be addressed and a new contract established "about a responsible

society working together to improve the quality of life for those who are worst off", in order to produce "positive behavioural effects" (ibid.). [36] In fact, the "current benefits system gives little consideration to the behaviours it generates" (ibid, 10) and provides "poor work incentives" for single parents and young people (ibid). In order to countervail the 'culture of dependency', a stiffened regime of sanctions needs to be introduced where benefits are withheld until "those who fail to meet their obligations … demonstrate that they have re-engaged with their personalised set of commitments" (ibid., 30).

While it would go too far to suggest that the current agenda of activation represents a clear reversal to 19th century conceptions of welfare, the turn towards activity has conspicuous precedents in British social policy. The 1832-34 Poor Law Commissioner's Report introduced the function of the Workhouse as that of infusing

> new life, new energy into the constitution of the pauper; he is aroused like one from sleep, his relation with all his neighbours, high and low, is changed; he surveys his former employers with new eyes. He begs a job – he will not take denial. (cited in King 1999, 227)

Ideas that motivate the current emphasis on responsibility and the push towards activity have been historically appealing.[37] Moreover, their appeal extends beyond political boundaries. For example, Anthony Giddens, a Labour Peer, recently outlined his ideas for the 'the post-industrial welfare society': "Welfare should be redefined in terms of personal autonomy and self-esteem, as desirable qualities of the good life. The cultivation of these qualities allows individuals to adapt to change and to make the most of their opportunities in different areas of their lives" (2007, 122-3). Autonomy is linked to self-esteem, whose lack "has been shown to be bound up with a range of social problems, including poverty, crime and poor health among others" (ibid, 123). Accordingly,

> [l]ifestyle change becomes a core concern of the welfare system. Incentives and sanctions are deployed to help secure positive outcomes. These have to be shaped through orthodox democratic mechanisms and should be geared to substantive freedoms. …The welfare system is designed to increase solidarity,

36 Although the Coalition's original policy blueprint did not envisage a reduction of benefits for those that are most vulnerable, this commitment appears difficult to maintain against the background of austerity measures and in line with the new Conservative commitment to introduce a £500-a-week 'benefit cap' (BBC 2011).

37 These developments may be seen to put some doubt on what remains of post-war ideals of social citizenship and social rights, such to "live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in the society" (Marshall 1950, 10).

> but above all through helping to reconcile cultural and lifestyle diversity with overall social cohesion. (ibid, 131)

Activation – the 'energization' that Giddens (1998, 63) had already envisaged as a core tool of the *Third Way* – is justified by positive social and individual outcomes, for how it heightens self-esteem, increases autonomy, averts social problems and preserves social cohesion. Lifestyle change remains the core objective of current welfare reform initiatives, and in this regard there clearly is continuity between New Labour and the current Coalition government.

Whatever the merits of the new welfare reform measures, it is clear that they strongly draw on ideas of self-reliance, autonomy and responsibility, which are further enshrined as conditional requirements for welfare provision. These understandings of responsible conduct and social activity have been expanded beyond the welfare state and, arguably, have taken hold in the domain of immigrant integration. The (abandoned) 'activity condition' in Labour's Earned Citizenship proposals is an example for this extension (McGhee 2010, 84-5). More generally, Christian Joppke draws attention to how new expectations are introduced, for example in naturalisation procedures where the attitudes and dispositions that need to be demonstrated to become eligible for citizenship have been revised and new expectations in the area of conduct and behaviour have been introduced (Joppke 2010, 140).

It is not our intention to quarrel with the activation thesis, or with arguments in favour of 'responsibility' and 'self-reliance', on a level of generality. Activity may be more desirable than passivity, though this proposition offers only limited ground to judge the measures envisaged in various reform proposals, be they in welfare reform or citizenship law. It is important to recognize, however, that social activation policies usually put forward requests neither for generalized activity, nor for self-determination in how individuals are supposed to exert their activity, but for pre-determined types. The kind of activity that is requested is usually highly regulated in accordance with particular understandings of the social interest. The 'disintegration thesis' and its prescriptions as to what kinds of moral conduct are conducive to social cohesion remains conspicuous in recent reform initiatives. By contrast, the mobility of unwanted immigrants, their movement in the labour market, or intra-communal activities of ethno-religious groups are not usually embraced as examples of self-reliance and activity (see also Lessenich 2009b, 169, 171). Despite such biases, the idea of activity has been

introduced as a counterpoint to older paradigms of welfare provision and social security. It has not only been adopted by governments but also been endorsed in the political science literature on 'new governance', where various types of strategies towards activation have been devised.

New Governance

Accounts of 'governance' have generally been inspired by an interest in changing relationships between state and society. The notion, governance, has spilled over across social science disciplines and fields of public policy application. Arguably, its attractiveness is partially explained by how it allows for diverse ideas to be subsumed under a common heading and to capture a wide range of ideas on how modern states, both domestically and internationally, respond – or, mostly, fail to respond – to new challenges, a new global connectedness, the proliferation of actors, and the 'complex' reality of modern social systems among them. As it speaks to the need to overcome ossified state structures, to de-bureaucratise governmental apparatuses, and to 'empower' civil society actors, 'governance' moreover seems to arouse vaguely positive feelings.

As part of the political science interest in governance, it has become commonplace to suggest that the exercise of top-down authority to implement decisions, deliver public services and intervene in social affairs has gradually given away. The new complexity of society, it is a frequent suggestion, requires methods that respond in a calibrated and fine-tuned way.[38] Commentators commonly point to the declining importance of

38 Jan Kooiman (1993, 46), an influential governance theorist, for example notes how by "stressing the complexity (patterns), dynamics (forces) and diversity (meanings) of interactions on different levels, governing and governance capacities are not seen as isolated and incidental top-down efforts of steering, managing, controlling or regulating, but as reflecting and representing the basic characteristics of the systems they are part". Complexity in the social world, accordingly, has to be met with complexity in the means of governmental interference. As in Kooiman's account, conceptions of 'the social world' in governance literature frequently follow a cybernetic perspective or systems-theoretical conception of society. A different governance theorist, Andrew Dunsire (1993, 22-3) puts the systems theoretic case for disintegration exemplarily by suggesting that the "apocalyptic question is whether social change at an ever-increasing rate, towards ever-increasing complexity, diversity and criticality, can be accommodated by the arrangements societies now make to keep disturbances within bounds and to steer change away from undesired and towards desired directions … or whether – in no long distant future – some random fluctuation in turbulence will produce a catastrophic decline in compliance, in governability, leading to social chaos." Jürgen Habermas (1976, 2), also committed to a systems perspective in his work on the Legitimation Crisis, provides a somewhat more sophisticated conception when he relates 'systems integration' to 'social integration': "crises arise when the structure of a social system allows fewer possibilities for problem solving than are necessary to the continued existence of the system. In this sense, crises are seen as persistent disturbances of system integration." This becomes

sovereign policy implementation that was seen to follow logics of 'coercion, command and control'. *Government* is seen as shorthand for old modes of state activity and of policy-making that is "backed by formal authority" (Rosenau 1992, 4), divided into relatively discrete issue areas, and best understood as involving the "formal and institutional processes which operate at the level of the nation" (Stoker 1998, 17). By contrast, there is no thick consensus as to what governance involves. Among a minimalist definition may be the idea that not just the state and its agencies, but various private actors now usually contribute to the deliberation on and the implementation of political decisions (Ronit and Schneider 1999; Hall and Biersteker 2002; Knill and Lehmkuhl 2002). Political steering, accordingly, does no longer need to be backed up by governmental sanctions (Stoker 1998, 24-6), as it follows logics of persuasion and deliberation among a variety of newly empowered actors (Risse 2000; 2004).

Mark Bevir (2003, 210) critically observes how governance often appears to be predicated on "[a]llegedly given pressures", which should be understood as "constructions of the particular narratives that currently happen to dominate the political debate". One such narrative has to do with increasing complexity, the problem of 'ungovernability' (Mayntz 1993), and the notion of social fragmentation. Following Hart's critical interrogation of Devlin's propositions, the following section considers the 'disintegration thesis' of new governance.

The disintegration thesis in governance

The emphasis on the novelty of governance seems to suggest a Copernican turn in the operation of politics, the decline of *Étatist* rationalities of government and the 'withering away' of the omnipotent state. This is frequently seen to have occurred over the last few decades of the 20th century. Milward and Provan capture the prevailing spirit (2002, 360, emphasis in original):

> Modern governments by their scale and scope are complex and highly differentiated. Complexity has been compounded by the trend toward establishing principal-agent relations with private firms and voluntary agencies

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potentially problematic "when the consensual foundations of normative structures are so much impaired that the society becomes anomic" (ibid, 3). While Habermas does not understand systems failure as apocalyptic as such, he sees an interdependence between systems and the social world and points to a potentially catastrophic impact of *Systemversagen* on social life-worlds. Habermas, of course, has been accused of offering too stark a choice between a conception of rationality and, if this rationality remains unrealized, the prospect of social and cultural catastrophe. Hart's puzzlement about the 'disintegration thesis' may apply to Habermas, too.

> as a result of purchaser-provider relationships. At the same time, the central government has become *hollowed out* as power is devolved to state and local governments.

While the last decades of the 20th century have been marked by an increasing currency of economically oriented policy paradigms, remodelled conceptions of the welfare state and processes of globalization and Europeanization, it should be fairly difficult to determine what aspects of 'the new' in governance are actually radically new. Across European states, private or semi-public actors have certainly played a role in political processes and in the provision of public services well before recent 'turns'. Moreover, as a sceptical antidote to exaggerated ideas of how globalisation voids domestic politics, it has become somewhat more widely accepted that states have not lost quite as much control as often seems to be implied. After all, when sovereign power is outsourced or devolved, this usually occurs by way of a sovereign act (Pierre and Peters 2005). Moreover, the social complexity that seemingly requires a radical departure from how we need to think about the state does not seem quite as novel as is suggested. Complexity that leads to social differentiation and requires efforts of social calibration has been a central feature of how, already with Durkheim, 'the social' was conceived. Guy Peters (2000, 37) quite rightly points to a distorted historical sense in how governance theorists appear to assume "a golden age of the state in the not too distant past. In that period the state was presumed to be pre-eminent and virtually unchallenged in its exercise of control over the economy and society."

It is not the point to dispute that the international entanglement of states and new domestic complexity may be perceived as salient challenges that require new types of governmental response. It is worth noting, however, that social fragmentation and complexity – just as the various dimensions of decline and disintegration discussed in the previous chapter – is a notion that depends on interpretation.[39] Its reliance on particular conceptions of society does not disqualify governance theory. However, where social fragmentation is invoked, we may reasonably ask what it signifies. We may, moreover, question perspectives that conceive of social fragmentation as a naturally given and introduce remedies as a matter of inevitability. The following

39 This is particularly evident in the commitment to many governance theorists to two perspectives that are ambiguously related. There is a strong apocalyptic inclination, and the notion that systemic failures and new social complexity pose an imminent risk if they fail to be met by the new governing techniques. Simultaneously, there is a celebratory streak in governance theory that recommends new forms of steering for how they are genuinely liberating, empowering, and conducive to autonomy and to individual and collective well-being.

briefly considers four propositions that loosely belong to the 'new governance' turn for how they draw on conceptions of society and recommend particular strategies of social activation.

Network Governance

In contrast to a focus on fixed institutional architectures inhabited by vertically integrated, independent actors, the network concept is often used to illustrate new principles of spatial organisation. In public policy planning, it is usually drawn on to emphasize how actors interrelate, collaborate, and are organised across the social landscape. A different strand in the literature points to instrumental reasons for the emergence of networks. Mayntz (2003, 31), for example, asserts that "[n]etworks typically emerge where power is dispersed among the agents in a policy field, but where co-operation is necessary for the sake of effectiveness". A network, Sørensen and Torfing (2007, 10) suggest, has

> a regulative aspect since it provides rules, roles and procedures; a normative aspect since it conveys norms, values and standards; a cognitive element since it generates codes, concepts and specialized knowledge; and an imaginary aspect since it produces identities, ideologies and common hopes.

Network governance makes suggestions on how these environments can be shaped in order for policy outcomes to be achieved.

Metagovernance

When command-and-control types of state intervention are either seen to have failed or to have become undesirable, metagovernance is seen to denote a backdoor through which to sustain a measure of political control. In this vein, the notion promises the best of both worlds: exercising control and avoiding undesirable policy outcomes, while granting leeway for non-state actors to solve problems largely of and by themselves. In this sense, metagoverning is not new. It refers to types of political intervention that have been characteristic at least of the ideal type of liberal social intervention that only envisages a place for the state on the margins of self-regulating processes. The contribution of the recent literature on metagovernance is to refine the liberal state's toolkits for such purposes. Eva Sørensen (2006, 102) conceives of metagovernance as

> an alternative form of governing that differs from sovereign rule in that it is not based on direct and detailed top-down control but on a plurality of indirect ways of influencing or coordinating the actions of self-governing actors.

Metagovernance draws on ideas of ‘co-governance’, backdoor control’, the framing of ‘self-governance’ and ‘story-telling’. The latter notion is seen to involve, for example, “shaping ... interests through the formation of the meanings and identities that constitute self-governing actors” (Sørensen 2006, 101). ‘Story-telling’ as a form of governmental intervention involves working upon the ideational framework around given policy issues (Sørensen 2006, 109-110).

Empowerment

In relation to the ‘new complexity’ stipulated in the discourse of governance, theorists point to the need to adopt particular efforts of political steering and social intervention. Hendrik Bang (2004, 160) for example suggests that “complexity must be handled with complexity”. This

> can be done by enabling more and more people to transform themselves into self-reflexive individuals who can, are willing, and understand how to, exercise a difference or practice their freedoms in and through the processes whereby binding decisions are made for a given society, terrain, field, domain or grouping of people (ibid.)

Bang conceives of this as ‘cultural governance’, but it has also been introduced as ‘empowerment’. The notion of empowerment captures a positive spirit towards devolving centralised authority to local agencies, their employees, citizens, customers and organized interest groups at local levels. These strategies are frequently introduced as in the interest of local self-determination, efficiency, effectiveness, and, more broadly, to tackle challenges for political steering in societies marked by complexity. Some contributors go so far as to suggest a systemic imperative for empowerment under conditions of complexity. Complex problems in social systems require complex solutions—and processes of empowerment may be suitable for arriving at a kind of ‘complexification’ of governing mechanisms.

There is also a more critical concern with ideas and practices of empowerment. Pierre and Peters (2000) see the potential for paradoxical effects of ‘mutual empowerment’: with local governments, workers at local state agencies and their customers all ‘empowered’ it is likely that conflicts ensue. Indeed, the lack of centralised coordination among mutually empowered actors might mean that “conflicts would be propelled upward in the political structures” (2000, 23), thus fostering unintended centralization,

rather than the intended decentralization of power.[40] Following a more Foucauldian line, Barbara Cruikshank (1999, 58) suggests that with empowerment the "individual's will and freedom to act are brought into line with the social good not through their negation but through the activation and maximization of the individual's will".

Nudging

A recently influential notion of social activation has been introduced by Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein (2009) with their idea of 'nudging'. Nudging is about the 'optimization' of individual choices. It abstains from direct interference but intends to shape individual strategies of choice by shaping its circumstances. It claims to be a version of 'libertarian paternalism': libertarian for its commitment to choice and paternalistic for its intention to frame an 'architecture' of choice. "Better governance", Thaler and Sunstein (2009, 15) suggest,

> requires less in the way of government coercion and constraint, and more in the way of freedom to choose. If incentives and nudges replace requirements, and bans, government will be both smaller and more modest. So, to be clear: *we are not for bigger government, just for better governance.*

Responding in particular to the protracted American debates over the scope of central government, nudging purports to be a middle ground, a "real third way" (2009, 253). "The sheer complexity of modern life", the authors suggest (ibid, 254), "undermine[s] arguments for rigid mandates or for dogmatic laissez-faire. Emerging developments should strengthen, at once, the principled commitment to freedom of choice and the case for the gentle nudge."[41]

This emphasis on freedom of choice and individual capacities for choosing is exemplary of the 'active society'. Nudging illustrates a tension that is equally pronounced in empowerment, meta- and network governance. The potential for social self-regulation is positively evaluated, either as a good in itself or for how it contributes to governing outcomes that could otherwise not be attained. At the same time, it is argued that it is necessary to channel social self-regulation so that it contributes to desired outcomes. If it remains unchanneled, the natural activity of social actors may lead to disastrous

40 See also Handler (1996) and Fischer (2006) for critical accounts of empowerment in public policy design.

41 Before the 2010 general election, *nudging* was considered as a candidate for the governing paradigm of a British Conservative government (Sparrow 2008). Within the British Cabinet Office, a 'Behavioural Insight Team' has been established that is advised by Richard Thaler.

governing outcomes. In the *nudging* scenario these are 'bad' life-style choices, such as the choice of sweets at the supermarket till. The 'choice design' that politicians have to contemplate, according to Thaler and Sunstein, operates similarly, only on a larger scale.

Ideas of activity have been proposed in different ways, and a variety of strategies have been developed by political scientists and public policy practitioners. We have already suggested that such strategies correspond to features of the social and political domains where problems are identified that are seen to require measures of activation. Ideas of activity in the labour market, civic activity and political participation, and notions of socio-cultural activity, in particular of ethnic-minority groups that are invited to increase their contact with majority society (their 'bridging capital'), are distinct for how they respond to particular social problems. They share the understanding that activity constitutes not only the most plausible response to social problems, but also that activation appears as the most suitable entry point for governmental intervention. The following three chapters develop these propositions in more contextual detail. While the critical engagement with different types of the politics of cohesion is a concern for the investigation of the three country cases too, the following section proposes some aspects of a critical perspective on the active society.

The critique of activation

A tension in governance discourse that has been identified before is also reflected in activation strategies. They appeal to the exercise of autonomy that can only produce desirable outcomes if it is severely channeled. This tension has not kept activity from becoming influential in public policy design. With 'empowerment', 'nudging', 'metagovernace' or 'network governance', the previous discussion has introduced four recently prominent examples of how activity ideas have been used in theoretical advances that underpin practical suggestions for how society should be governed. While the diversity of 'activating' policy instruments and administrative practices makes it unfeasible to present an encompassing overview, the following considers some avenues towards a critical understanding of activation in 'new governance'. We briefly discuss problems with the idea of 'responsibility' in activation before considering in some detail suggestions made by Stephan Lessenich, a German sociologist. We then turn to recent

work by Luc Boltanski, a French social theorist, who provides a pragmatic and minimalist foundation for the critique of social activation.

Jørgen Elm Larsen (2005, 136) suggests that if there is anything that can be considered as characteristic of the idea of an 'active society' it is the notion of self-reliance, which has become a "dominating element in the reshaping of social policy". Clearly, self-reliance and responsibility are popular, but also problematic formulae that may support diverse measures and instruments in recent social policy reform. Jean-Michel Bonvin and Nicolas Farvaque (2004, 20) point to one aspect of the problematic implications of responsibility, which "without the provision of fair and enabling conditions … may lead to disastrous outcomes for people." Bonvin elaborates on this in a critical discussion of responsibility in the politics of activation. The idea with responsibility is to pursue objectives that are, at a macro level, about "increasing the employment rates" and, at a micro level, about the acceleration of "reintegration into the labour market": "This issue being settled, the challenge faced in social policies boils down to finding the most efficient modes of governance in order to promote such responsible behaviour among the local agents of the welfare state and the beneficiaries" (2008, 67). Drawing on Amartya Sen's (1993) 'capabilities' approach, Bonvin argues that a considerable part of the instruments and practices pursued under the label of activation fall short of a meaningful understanding of responsibility. 'Empowerment', for example, is not by itself "sufficient to foster responsibility. Indeed, if a person adequately empowered is not free to use his or her capacity in the way s/he chooses to […], it still does not make sense to speak of responsible or irresponsible behaviour" (2008, 368). Apart from the absence of meaningful choice that might make the reference to responsibility seem hollow, there is a further problem with assumptions about responsibility in activation: these often involve the imposition of "one and the same conception of activation on all beneficiaries" (2008, 370).

While a concern with the distribution of capabilities seems relevant, it does not quite address situations where it is not formulaic or insincere promises of activity that require examination, but where the very conditions that make social problems appear amenable to activity need to be examined. The imagination of 'the social' as a space and a configuration of social forces – in line with concerns outlined in the previous chapter – clearly needs to be of interest in how society, in its alleged 'complexity' and 'fragmentation', has been perceived in the governance of activation. Considering the

'activity turn' as an instance of the 'reinvention of the social' (*Neuerfindung des Sozialen*), Stephan Lessenich (2008, 38) sees a reconfiguration of social relationships on three levels: "between individual and society, in the relationship between individual, collective and corporate actors, as well as in the way subjects relate to themselves". Lessenich (2008, 17) notes how the activity idea takes up "subjective values of social conduct – activity and mobility, productivity and autonomy" and develops these into "formulas for political steering".

In their political deployments, Lessenich (2008, 76) suggests, activity, mobility and movement are not valued as such, but only if the according orientations are "considered to be beneficial to the social good, if they are exercised with a social intention". "In the activating, preventive welfare state … the subjectivity of citizens is socialized, channelled for social aims and purposes, programmed in the spirit of the social" (2008, 122). In how activity is exercised, a social point of view needs to be adopted and internalized. Unchanneled activity is considered problematic, and populations that are portrayed as work-averse or activation-resistant are targeted, and, more than this, considered as a threat to social cohesion (2008, 95). Practices of exemplary visualization play a significant role: ideally adapted individuals that master the vicissitudes of multiple activity requirements and cope with pressures even under adverse circumstances are introduced as the role models of the active society (2008, 126). Their example underpins the reiteration of requirements of flexibility and adaptability in political rhetoric, in strategies of political marketing and in the media representation of desirable forms of social life. Significantly for Lessenich, the activity requirement is substantiated by new social imaginaries – by a 'reinvention of the social'.

A related perspective to Lessenich's suggestion that a 'reinvention of the social' predisposes government in new ways, has been put forward by the French social theorist Luc Boltanski, working with Eve Chiapello, on the 'projective city' (or *Project-oriented Cité*):

> In the Project-oriented *Cité* the general standard, with respect to which all persons' and things' greatness is evaluated, is activity. Contrary to what happens in the Industrial *Cité*—where activity means 'work' and being active means 'holding a steady and wage-earning position'—in the Project-oriented *Cité*, activity overcomes the oppositions between work and no-work, steady and unsteady, paid and unpaid, profit-sharing and volunteer work, and between that

> which can be measured in terms of productivity and that which cannot be assessed in terms of accountable performances. Life is conceived as a series of projects, all the more valuable when different from one another. What is relevant is to be always pursuing some sort of activity, never to be without a project, without ideas, to be always looking forward to, and preparing for, something along with other persons whose encounter is the result of being always driven by the impulse of activity. (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005b, 169)

Boltanski and Chiapello see the projective city in the context of a new spatial ordering of society. Where the conception of society as a system of needs and of welfare intervention envisaged 'the social' as a demarcated territory, the new conception is one of society as an open network in which points are variously connected. Individuals, in a networked space, are situated, move and relate to one another in a different way than how it was envisaged in the old spatial ordering of the post-war social economy and its "industrial city". Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 105) suggest that the new social spatiality foregrounds the project as the aim of individual activity and as the organizing principle for the construction of networks. Projects are not individual endeavours; they are socially constituted. They are taken on relationally and their successful pursuit depends on one's networked location in social spaces and on one's ability to advantageously relate to others. Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 57) consider in particular the diffusion of management discourses that have been systematically extended in the last third of the 20th century and have been introduced as templates for social activity and the pursuit of individual lives.

> New maxims of success accompany the establishment of such a world and a new system of values is constructed on which people can rely to make judgments; to discriminate between behaviour that is satisfactory and behaviour that leads to exclusion; to put a value on qualities and attitudes that had not hitherto been identified as distinctive; to legitimate new positions of power; and to select those who are to enjoy them. (Boltanski and Chiapello 2005a, 105)

The establishment of new hierarchies of social characters types, and new taxonomies for advantageous and detrimental dispositions in the pursuit of social activity, may, then, constitute a point of departure for the critique of the 'projective city' as well as of the governance of activation. In fact, Bonvin's remark on differential capabilities for activity, and how these are frequently ignored in activation discourse, can be understood as a critique of how, with Boltanski and Chiapello, the generalization of the 'projective city' leads to unjust outcomes and creates new hierarchies.

Two critical orientations – one concerned with the biased nature of political practices of activation, the other with the social imaginary that makes activity appear plausible in the first place – are available, and the following will develop these in a brief and general discussion of critical perspectives.

Luc Boltanski (2011) in *On Critique* has recently made suggestions that are particularly suitable for our purposes. If it intends to be more than an instantiation of normative ideals – more than *discovery* or *invention* as Michael Walzer (1987) has famously suggested in his Tanner Lectures on *Interpretation and Social Criticism* – the question for any critical practice is how to position itself vis-à-vis the practices it criticizes. In the pragmatic orientation that Boltanski advocates, it is justifications and the critical work that actors themselves engage in that has to provide this point of departure. Boltanski (2011, 16-7) suggests that the

> processes through which the actors in social life constitute the wholes of which they form part, and cause them to last or subvert them, are themselves articulated, in large measure, with the possibility of critique, not only when they challenge existing orders, but also when they are led to justify them.

This means "making use of the point of view of the actors" for a critical position that is based on "their moral sense and, in particular, on their ordinary sense of justice, to expose the discrepancy between the social world as it is and as it should be in order to satisfy people's moral expectations" (2011, 30). This position "fully acknowledges actors' critical capacities and the creativity with which they engage in interpretation and action *en situation*" (2011, 43). This reliance on the critical capacities of actors would of course be open to the objection that it is not more than a simple reflection, an exercise of summarizing opinions and preferences. Boltanski's position, however, is built on the rejection of the idea that there is an "implicit agreement, which would somehow be immanent in the functioning of social life" (2011, 6). He suggests putting 'dispute' and,

> with it, the divergence of points of view, interpretations and usages at the heart of social bonds, so as to return from this position to the issue of agreement, to examine its problematic, fragile and possibly exceptional character. (2011, 61)

Disputes over meaning, the indeterminacy of understandings (such as of activity, cohesion, or society) and the interpretive work that actors themselves undertake, mean that critique remains challenging and in a position of 'complex exteriority' to its object (2011, 6). It does not formulate absolutes but makes propositions that resonate with the critical positions that are available in society. It takes seriously the fact that these

positions reflect indeterminate understandings and emerge themselves as interpretations. In this sense, Boltanski presents a more sociologically grounded formulation of ideas that Laclau (1990) and others working within the agonistic or radical democracy tradition have put forward (see Shapiro 2007): hegemonic meaning and fixed understandings, such as of society, require particular critical attention.

From this pragmatically grounded position Boltanski makes suggestions on possible starting points for social critique. A sense of injustice, ordinarily available among social actors, appears to be based on the intuition that "it is always *the same people* who pass all or more tests, whatever their nature, and, on the other hand, … it is always *the same people* who, confronted with all tests (or virtually all), prove mediocre" (2011, 38, emphases in original).[42] For Boltanski (2011, 29), "a test is regarded as unjust by people when it takes account, invariably in implicit or hidden from, of forces that do not pertain to the kind of city in which the test is, in principle, inscribed". The kinds of tests envisaged in the 'projective city' measure the capacity to network and connect. Such tests have become increasingly generalized and requirements of adaptation, creativity, networking and flexibility now apply to domains where other measurements of success and worth were previously inscribed. The hierarchies that this expansion creates, Boltanksi suggests, are reflected in the fact that it is *always the same people* that tend to assume inferior positions in the projective city's hierarchy of worth. The critical intuition of injustice is, hence, based on the observation that new logics of social interaction, behaviour and conduct have become widespread.

For the purpose of the following, this intuition will not be developed into a full-fledged framework. It merely serves to highlight that activity, as it becomes a general expectation and informs a framework for measuring individual worth, is open to be criticized for its *injustice*. The grounding of this intuition and the foundation for this understanding of justice are of less concern here. It may be based on attitudes among actors in response to their subjection to activation measures (though the thesis does not engage with such responses); on a mismatch between the promises of empowerment and a reality of coercion (though, arguably, this mismatch is present wherever social

42 Boltanski and Chiapello (2005a, 31) conceive of tests as contests of strength that occur within frameworks of "justificatory constraints". Measurements of success or of fair play thus vary according to established rules governing the contest, and such frameworks differ, such as between the 'industrial' and the 'projective city'. When "protagonists judge that these constraints are being genuinely respected, the test of strength will be regarded as legitimate." (ibid., 32-3).

policy is made); or it may come from an engagement with how the politics of cohesion claims to be inevitable and activation the logical response to material social problems (though unmasking these pretensions does not mean repudiating them). In some form, such perspectives may provide some limited foundations for social critique, but none is without problems and aporias that are impossible to address within the scope of the following discussion.[43] A more limited intuition may be sufficient. Stephan Lessenich (2005, 28) suggests that "who preaches activation and integration but practices precarisation and compulsion should be subjected, if not to political critique, then at least of social analysis." In the politics of cohesion, biases of activation need to be examined, and social imaginaries that underpin measures of activation need to be exposed.

Conclusion

The chapter has suggested that activation, beyond its role in labour market and welfare reform, informs new understandings of social regulation across issue areas and domains of social life. In relation to the turn towards governance in political science and in the public policy world, the idea is that social disintegration, or fragmentation and social complexity as the social imaginaries of 'new governance', need to be countered by heightened activity.

The following analyses of prescriptions towards activity in the politics of cohesion will not be entirely straightforward. We should expect to find disjunctures and ambiguities among political initiatives that envisage the activation of populations. In fact, it will be necessary to consider the significance of *activity* as a rhetorical device that works not despite but because of such ambiguities. For example, the exhortation of populations to become active does not need to be – though it often is – accompanied by tangible and coherent policy measures to have an effect on the political debate and on the range of options that are available for addressing social problems. Significantly, the efficacy of activation measures in the politics of cohesion should also be considered for how it invalidates competing perspectives and objectives. With community cohesion, significant urban problems in Britain were conceived as requiring the remedy of

43 The overall conclusion offers some additional suggestions on the possibility of a social critique of the politics of cohesion.

flexibility, social contact and 'vibrancy'. The plausibility of such prescriptions meant that different ideas and different analyses were considered implausible or impractical.

A different aspect of this ambiguity is that activation often seems contradictory for how it simultaneously embodies an ideal that, in practice, is found to be lacking. Activation works with a certain anthropological circularity in how individuals are already conceived as those active subjects that measures are intended to produce. This circularity is mirrored in the social imaginary of cohesion and its characteristic coincidence of lack and fullness, or disintegration and unity. The ever-present possibility for society to disintegrate coincides with equally present potentialities for cohesiveness. Post-immigration groups in Britain are said to be deeply fragmented, separated from majority society and inward-looking. Simultaneously, they are also seen to be already exhibiting all the necessary ingredients for becoming vibrant and cohesive. Political apathy in Germany puts social and civic solidarity at risk but citizens are not just apathetic, they are also always already profoundly engaged and responsive to the *Bürgergesellschaft* idea. The moral crisis that Jacques Chirac invoked in 1995 contrasts with humane and moral potentials that were consistently invoked in his rhetoric of *fracture sociale*. In how these contrasts are drawn, activation is inserted as the plausible remedy to avert disintegration and achieve social cohesion.

The following chapters trace the development of cohesion in these three instances and examine how ideas of social activity were linked to cohesion in the formation of political agendas. This means that we are largely unconcerned with the precise content of public policy measures towards social activity that were introduced. Instead, the focus of the following is on how, when cohesion came into the picture, social problems were considered as caused by insufficient activity. Subsequent chapters critically engage with how – where social cohesion was seen to be at risk – activity was introduced as a remedy**.**

Chapter 3: *Exclusion* and *Cohésion Sociale*

Introduction

By early 1995, the campaign for the succession of François Mitterand had taken a surprising turn. Against earlier expectations the President of the European Commission, Jacques Delors, had been hesitant to be drawn into its partisan quarrels. Lionel Jospin was widely regarded as the second-best choice for the candidacy to follow Mitterand for the *Parti Socialiste* (PS).[44] On the centre-right, the ambitions of Jacques Chirac, two-time Prime Minister of 1974-76 and 1986-88 and then-mayor of Paris, had been frustrated by the candidacy of the sitting Prime Minister Édouard Balladur whose decision to run contradicted earlier assurances. In the beginning of 1995, Balladur was widely seen to be in a far better position than Chirac to claim the presidency for the RPR (*Rassemblement pour la république*) (Bernard 2005, 94).

With the vote divided on the centre right, both candidates played to their strengths. For Balladur this was the posture of the competent moderniser (Plenel 1994). Jacques Chirac, by contrast, would emphasise the 'humane touch', his particular concern not only for the material but also for the emotional well-being of the French. It was frequently repeated in Chirac's campaign that this concern could not be expressed in the form of technocratic policy commitments but required a sense of compassion and proximity (Jarreau 1994). Chirac's display of humane concern served to draw a contrast between his proximity to the people and Balladur's distance (Chirac 1994; 2007).[45]

Already before the first round of the presidential election, Chirac, Balladur and Jospin had committed themselves to new political measures in the fight against *exclusion sociale*.[46] While Jospin had made the most far-reaching and tangible policy

44 In November 1994 Jospin himself acknowledged that Delors would be the 'most efficient candidate for the left' (Le Monde 1994b)

45 This was despite Chirac's conventional biography that included the usual career steps of members of the French administrative elite and, more significantly, a liberal reformist record as a Prime Minister in the 1980s.

46 Although notions such as exclusion and cohesion are shared, there are considerable difficulties in translating social policy concepts from French into English without loosing some of the meaning particular to the French traditions of social policy language or falsely implying its continuity with English discourses (Révauger 2001). Jean-Paul Révauger remarks that "[p]roblems start when the concepts are expected to bear some relationship with nations in which they neither do not exist, or have a totally meaning altogether" (Révauger 1998, 37). Unless otherwise indicated, this chapter acknowledges the French original and does not rely on the assumption of a one-to-one fit between the two languages.

commitments, such as on "ending homelessness" within two years (Le Monde 1995a), the two candidates on the right had also promised to move rapidly ahead with plans, laws and policies to tackle *exclusion sociale* (Le Monde 1994a; Castaing 1995). With Balladur narrowly eliminated in the first round, the debate between Chirac and Jospin continued to be concerned with exclusion. Jean-Marie Le Pen, the right-wing populist, had achieved an unprecedented 15% in the first round of the election. The disaffection of the French electorate, alleged to have been the cause for the far right's success, was drawn into the debate and connected to diagnoses of social exclusion. Chirac, in a televised debate with Jospin, thus claimed that a

> very large number of French people find themselves in an uncomfortable situation. They are unhappy for various reasons. They feel a little bit excluded (*un peu exclus*). This is a diagnosis that I have put forward for some time now and that translates itself into a social rift (*fracture sociale*) that puts into question the cohesion of our country and thus its strength. Reducing this rift, this is the essential problem. This means considering people's everyday difficulties: let's get back to this, and offer them solutions. (Chirac cited in Le Monde 1995b)

In the programmatic manifesto for his campaign, *La France pour tous*, Chirac (1994, 9-11) elaborated on this idea of a social rift:

> France suffers from more profound ill than political actors, those responsible for the economy, the intellectuals that are *en vogue* or media celebrities can imagine. The people have lost confidence. Their uncertainty (*désarroi*) leads to resignation; it risks inciting anger. All the indicators reveal the symptoms but no therapy has been prescribed because too many of those who are responsible concern themselves with indicators and forget about the people. But numbers themselves do not express the gravity of the social rift (*fracture sociale*) that menaces – I choose my words carefully – our national unity. More than half of the French population has neither been listened to nor defended.

Those themes, the rejection of conventional, 'technocratic' means for addressing social problems, and the offer of an alternative politics that would provide for certainty and security, emotional understanding and proximity to the people, ran through the rhetoric of Chirac's campaign.

In the context of the debate in 1994 and 1995, Chirac had embraced the notion of social exclusion, effectively captured a particular understanding when he made *fracture sociale* the guiding theme of his campaign and outmanoeuvred both Balladur and Jospin.[47] Balladur had to commit himself to an objective that seemed implausible for

47 The philosopher Marcel Gauchet (1990) had prominently coined *fracture sociale* in relation to the success of the far right *Front National*. Emmanuel Todd, a sociologist, then popularized the term

him, since it sat uneasily with his persona and his liberal-reformist policy record as Prime Minister (Plenel 1994). Jospin faced a different problem, summed up by Bertrand Delanoë, leader of the Socialists in the Parisian assembly:

> It is difficult to effectively oppose a mayor [Chirac] who has taken such a turn to the left (*se gauchise*). We need to explain to Parisians the difference between one set of decisions, some of which correspond to our demands, and others that are mere tactical manoeuvres that correspond to provisional measures (*coups corespondant à des mesures provisoires*). (Bertrand Delanoë cited in Chirot 1994)[48]

Faced with Chirac's *gauchisme*, Jospin responded defensively. He argued that "the fight against exclusion is not only a priority for the right; it is also one for me. I have always stood for the values of justice, equality, solidarity, we have not seen Jacques Chirac identify with these kinds of things in his political career" (cited in Le Monde 1995b).

In the context of political debate in 1995, the attempt to reclaim exclusion for the left turned out to be difficult. The earlier slogan of Jospin's campaign, *la France unie* (France united), was substituted for *une France plus juste* (a fairer France) (Emmanuelli and Frémontier 2002). Jospin's definition of exclusion as *injustice* had to compete with Chirac's more encompassing definition of exclusion as *insecurity* and as notion that could be related to various dimensions of a perceived malaise in French society and its psychological dimensions.[49] Chirac's offer was one of proximity and emotional understanding. Jospin's solution, by contrast, was to adopt new social policy measures, which Chirac had already denounced – with his critique of the 'technocratic' orientation in French politics – as insufficient to address the problem at hand.

In French political discourse of 1995, the concept of social exclusion was both pervasive and exceedingly ambiguous. It had been multiply defined, in relation to tangible social problems, unemployment, homelessness, the situation in the *banlieues*, the agglomerates on the urban margins, but also with a view to anxieties over social disintegration, downward mobility and national decline (Lenoir 1974; Barbier 2005). Jacques Chirac, while gesturing to the first dimension of the concept, effectively

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and it is presumably from Todd that Jacques Chirac borrowed the concept. Todd, however, was critical of Chirac's reference to *fracture sociale* (Ferenczi 1995)

48 The occasion was Chirac's suggestion to introduce a set of progressive housing measures in favour of homeless people, such as the requisition of unoccupied properties.

49 This was at a time when there was considerable anxiety on the French Left on the orientation of welfare policies. Martine Aubry, for example, suggested that the *Parti Socialiste* needed to rediscover "proximity" in the provision of social services (Le Monde 1994a).

captured the second, such as when he suggested that "the loss of hope constitutes the greatest social risk" (Chirac cited in Le Monde 1994) or that the "relative and precarious calm of today is a mere result of the fear of tomorrow" (Chirac 1994, 47). Chirac's adoption of the concept of *fracture sociale* effectively defined idea of social exclusion in relation to widespread anxieties, which he alleged to be characteristic of the French condition in the 1990s.

This chapter is concerned with the discursive and legislative aftermath of these exchanges. The year 1995 marked the beginning of a series of efforts to legislate *against* exclusion and *for* a theme that had not been central in course of the election, *cohésion sociale.* In the following years, social cohesion became the headline title of social policy initiatives. The formation of these initiatives is traced here with particular reference to discourses among prominent politicians that accompanied two legislative efforts in 1997 and 2004/5. The suggestion is that these initiatives reflect changing concerns about the meaning of social solidarity in France. The re-interpretation of *exclusion sociale* and the introduction of *cohésion sociale* were part of a shift of concerns towards the reliance on social activity and indicative of a "trend towards social activation" (Palier 2005, 139). Republican solidarity is increasingly seen to entail the emphasis on generalized individual responsibility, mobility and social activity.

In relation to these changes, which this chapter explores only in a cursory fashion, there are three features that are of particular interest. First, and in line with the core theme of the thesis, the commitment to *cohésion sociale* can be understood as a commitment to solve social problems through activation. While the mobilisation for social cohesion was frequently seen to require "social investment" (Emmanuelli 1997; Chirac 2004b), it increasingly refers to attitudinal changes on the part of problematic populations: the unemployed who need to make themselves employable; welfare recipients who need to be activated; young people who need to pull their act together; and the inhabitants of the *banlieues* who – such as in the debate about the causes of urban unrest in 2005 – were asked to become more French, less Muslim, more productive and less violent.

Second, new ideas about the capacity and scope of policy-making became evident. The time between 1995 and 2005, that is between Chirac's marketing of *fracture sociale* and the urban unrest of 2005, can be seen to exemplify for France what Jürgen Habermas (1989, 68) has referred to as the "departure of the utopian contents of the laboring

society". Commentators suggest that with the declining significance and increasing precariousness of the salaried, industrial workforce, the promise of social improvement through labour or through the mechanisms of the welfare state has become hollow. Jacques Donzelot (2006) suggest that *progrès social* (social progress) has been replaced by *cohésion sociale*, and the aspiration to improve society has been substituted by measures that target and mobilize marginalized populations. The preservation of social cohesion is what is left as other, more demanding projects came to be seen as outdated. We explore this shift and how it relates to new definitions of political objectives in a review of the French literature on the so-called *nouvelle question sociale* (Donzelot 1994; Castel 1995; Rosanvallon 1995).

Third, while the understanding of social inclusion (or, frequently, *insertion* in French policy language) often continues to be considered as a matter of solidarity and legal entitlement, there are conspicuous changes in how the nature of such solidarities is conceived. The mediating discourse for identifying who belongs within a French model of collective solidarity appears to have shifted. In the presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy, the predominant domain where such discourses are carried out has become national identity (Besson 2009; Sarkozy 2009). The notion of *cohésion sociale*, it will be claimed in this chapter, has proven to be a vehicle for moving the debate in these directions. This became particularly palpable in how the account of *exclusion sociale* was *not* applied to understand episodes of urban unrest in 2005 or, more generally, social problems in the French *banlieues*.

While the following chapters explore the problematic nature of civil society in the German discourse of *Bürgergesellschaft* and aspects of the debate about the social integration of ethnic minority groups in Britain, this chapter is concerned with French discourses of social marginality and solidarity. In contrast to the other two cases, the following investigates the policy discourse of a centre-right president 1995-2005.[50] While this may seem somewhat peculiar, it is our suggestion that Jacques Chirac falls squarely in a field also occupied by Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair. Chirac's (1994, 19-29) presentation of his persona and his policies as 'beyond left and right' coincides with and resembles the discovery of the middle ground in the Third Way or the *Neue Mitte*.

50 It effectively brackets the contribution of a socialist government in the *Troisième Cohabitation* of 1997-2002.

In relation to the policy priorities of *fracture sociale*, Chirac positioned himself accordingly: "I don't know if these are left- or right-wing objectives. In any case, they are mine" (quoted in Emmanuelli and Frémontier 2002, para. 2). While on social policy grounds there was little programmatic overlap between Jospin's PS government 1997-2002 and Tony Blair's New Labour, Chirac's political and rhetorical commitments resonated across the Channel (Lawday 2002). In addition to a similar rhetoric, it is the creative work on new social imaginaries to underpin and market political proposals that point to how Jacques Chirac and his administrations should be of interest in comparison to the agendas explored in the following chapters. Such imaginaries, as their counterparts in Germany and Britain, are introduced as a departure from traditional conceptions of social solidarity towards notions of social activation and responsibility.

This chapter provides a selective account and little more than a snapshot of a moving picture of shifting political commitments. Indeed, the *cap social*, the social orientation of French governments and the social course of action in French public policy-making, continue to be debated.[51] Political analysts point to profound transformations, such as Jonah D. Levy (2005, 104), who suggests that the

> traditional *dirigiste* strategy of directing capital while excluding and neglecting labor has been abandoned. State authorities are striving instead to facilitate market-led adjustment while pacifying and demobilizing potential victims in this process. In a sense, the *dirigiste* state has become the social anesthesia state.

While such transformations seem important to consider, they depend on political initiatives to be articulated in practice. Despite their fluidity, it is significant to examine such debates and how the conceptual repertories of social policy are re-framed for the simple reason, as Révauger (1998, 30) puts it for France, that "concepts convey meanings, they organize reality in our minds and eventually lead to a restricted set of political options. Understanding concepts should help citizens keep their options open." This is particularly the case for France, which has been an incubator for ideas of social exclusion and social cohesion. In fact, a new terminology of social marginality, *precarité, marginalité* and *exclusion*, was coined in France since the 1970s. The

51 Such as when the former Prime Minister Jean-Pierre Raffarin in the context of wide-spread protests against pension reform in October 2010 prompts Sarkozy to consider a 'social relaunch' (*un plan de relance sociale*) and when the speculation is that Jean-Louis Borloo, the current Secretary for the Environment, might be the right person to instantiate this *nouveau cap social* (Agence France Presse 2010). Borloo, as minister for social cohesion, had been the leading protagonist of Jacques Chirac's social relaunch in 2004/5 and his role is examined in some more detail below.

identification of new forms of poverty, its articulation in a new language and the pursuit of policies of *insertion* make France an international frontrunner in the pursuit of a politics of social cohesion.[52]

Social policy-making, however, is imperfectly understood if the concern is only with terminological change. Social imaginaries may provide for projections of society as endangered and facilitate the propositions of political remedies that are introduced as salvaging operations. The changing meaning of social exclusion and new political priorities towards social cohesion are discussed here with an interest in how they coincide with and support a reinterpretation of republican solidarity and a turn towards social activation.

A new social question

Changing conceptions of society have in recent years been of significant historical interest in France, and the following briefly reviews a literature that attempts to historically reconstruct the beginnings of social concerns, of a *social question*, in the 19th century. In this literature, in particular in the work of Jacques Donzelot (1980; 1994), Robert Castel (1995; 2003) and Pierre Rosanvallon (1995), it is usually suggested that what we witness today, since the beginning of the fourth quarter of the 20th century, is a reformulation of an old question and the emergence of new social concerns. It is necessary here to briefly consider this historical account and its relevance for social debates in the 1990s. However, while the shift that Donzelot and others bring out corresponds to our concerns, we suggest that a more thorough emphasis is needed on how the *new social question* is formulated and becomes effective in political discourse.

Jacques Donzelot traces the beginnings of a modern idea of 'the social', as something that requires management (*faire du social)*, in the context of France's post-revolutionary democratic enfranchisement. The poverty of the masses, pauperism, became an issue not merely with industrialization but with the emergence of new social subjects, whose needs it was necessary to administer in a coherent system of social management - not least as those subjects had become voters (Donzelot 1980, 54). Robert Castel (1995), who is more interested in the role of labour, traces in rich genealogical detail how

52 More than a decade before the British government would reconsider its social policy-making to combat 'social exclusion' (Levitas 1998), *exclusion sociale* was a key motif in French social policy.

conceptions of social problems corresponded to the kinds of discoveries that Donzelot describes. The emergence of a large-scale salaried workforce in the 19th century, he suggests, meant that social problems were conceived in relation to the conditions of this workforce, the *salariat*. The 'old social question' was thus about the pauperism of the salaried and strategies of social improvement made use of a system of professional solidarity to gradually improve the condition of labour in society. For their civic status and their social needs, Donzelot and Castel suggest, the condition of the industrial workforces provided the starting point of the formulation of social concerns, in fact for the *invention of society* (see Chapter 1), and for how these concerns were encapsulated in the institutions of the welfare state.

The 'crumbling' of the salaried workforce (*l'effritement de la condition salarielle*) (Castel 1995a, 621, 704) since the 1970s has changed the picture. Castel identifies three features of the transitions that throw up a 'new social question': the destabilisation of previously stable modes of work and life (*déstabilisation des stables*), the emergence of precarious forms of employment, and the lack of available social positions for those that have been excluded and marginalized. This, Castel suggests, is not merely a process that affects those on the margins, but leads to more general transformations in society.

> In the same manner that the pauperism of the 19th century was written into the heart of dynamics of the first industrialisation, the new precarious condition of work is a central process, driven by new exigencies of techno-economic evolution of modern capitalism. (Castel 1995, 661-2)

This change is accompanied by "the passage from politics conducted in the name of integration towards politics in the name of *insertion*" (Castel 1995, 675). Integration was about the establishment of a social equilibrium by offering "universal access to public services and education, reduction of social inequality and an improved distribution of opportunities, the development of social protection and the consolidation of the salaried condition" (Castel 1995a, 676). *Insertion*, by contrast, is targeted at "particular populations in particular zones" (ibid).[53] Particular populations have become the focus of new governmental attention and new objects of a type of concern that

53 Hilary Silver (1994, 542) states that *integration* and *insertion* are used "synonymously" in French social policy discourse. Daniel Béland suggests, by contrast, that insertion refers to a "participatory model of 'activation'" (Béland 2007, 129). The meaning of the concept of *insertion* itself, for how it responds to changing conceptions of social exclusion, has shifted over time, and so have policy measures against exclusion and towards insertion. In English, inclusion, rather than social integration, would probably be a more appropriate translation of *insertion*.

considers their *insertion* as a task that requires perpetual efforts. Castel (1995, 699) identifies these populations as follows:

> What is a permanently inserted? Someone who is not completely abandoned, who is being accompanied in his or her present situation by a net of activities, initiatives, projects that is woven around him/her. … For many of such people, *insertion* is not a stage but a permanent condition.

The new social question considers how to incorporate socially marginalized populations in a society that lacks old avenues of upward mobility through wage labour. This new social question, Castel suggests, is answered with *activity*. Activation, under the conditions outlined by Castel, consists not merely of a one-off push but, as he puts it, in the meticulous "construction of a set of projects and initiatives" (ibid.) around the marginalized. *Insertion* in this sense is no longer a temporary stage but a permanent condition (*l'insertion n'est plus une étape, elle est un état*) (ibid.). The following suggests that in the political debate of the 1990s, not beginning with, but certainly reinforced by Chirac's 1995 campaign, the turn towards this understanding of *insertion* was accelerated.[54]

Castel's critique of the politics of *insertion* has not been met with general agreement. Pierre Rosanvallon, for example, has pointed to similar structural transformations but has offered a more positive evaluation of the politics of *insertion*. For Rosanvallon (1995, 222), the 'new social question' arises in a situation where the "classic opposition between individual and collective is no longer workable. We can no longer distinguish between the reform of mentalities and of structures, between individual morality and political imperatives". His suggestion is that politics needs to take account of and be concerned with the shaping of "mentalities". For Rosanvallon, the appeal to individual responsibility needs to become part of new political strategies.

Rosanvallon argues that this implies a reconsideration of the idea of social rights and to a perspective on exclusion that is different from the rights-based, republican one.

> The obligation that accompanies them [social rights] is not a form of the restriction of liberty, but a moment of the reconstruction of the social. We can

54 The 'new social question' certainly corresponds to the analysis of Boltanski and Chiapello (2005b, 169) of the 'new spirit of capitalism' and how its defining feature has become "the impulse of activity", that is to "never to be without a project, without ideas, to be always looking forward to, and preparing for" (ibid.).

> see here that the notion of *insertion* makes us radically reconsider the organisational principles of individualist society. (Rosanvallon 1995, 181)[55]

The influential contributions by Rosanvallon and Castel are characteristic of the state of French academic debate in 1995 for how they identify structural changes that are seen to have occurred over the last decades. Their suggestion is that the breakdown of conventional models of social welfare – as they had been devised in response to the 'first social question' – reveals a new social question, which is met by a turn towards *insertion* understood as social activation. Castel criticizes the corresponding measures, in particular for how they systematically fail to consider that inclusion into the workforce has little to offer since the industrial base for this workforce has been dismantled and, accordingly, since the promise of upward social mobility through inclusion into the *salariat* has disappeared. Rosanvallon acknowledges these transformations but, in contrast to Castel, embraces the new measures of *insertion* that have been devised in response.

Before we proceed with a discussion of how the 'new social question' was portrayed in political discourse of the 1990s, it is important to point out that both Rosanvallon and Castel paid little attention to one of the core concerns of this thesis. Both consider the failure of the old social model as empirically given. However, it seems that the experience of this failure is not exclusively sustained by a neutral consideration of changing material conditions. It is a discursive phenomenon, where the breakdown of an old order is invoked and connected to the promises that new social imaginaries are said to hold. For example, Chirac's diagnosis of *fracture sociale* drew strongly on the construction of an experience of crises that was sustained, as we suggest in the following, by the reference to the *trente glorieuses*. Although this reference pointed to structural transformations in the French economy, the idea of a crisis in the aftermath of these thirty years of post-war prosperity was constructed in a particular way. It allowed for the introduction of new visions of social solidarity as a counterpoint. The following section explores these connections and how they informed discourses of social exclusion.

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55 The need to rethink principles of social solidarity and social cohesion, as suggested by Rosanvallon, mirrors the rhetoric of the Third Way. It predates for example Gidddens' suggestion that lives need to be lived "in a more active way" and "individual and collective responsibilities" rebalanced (Giddens 1998, 37). In fact, Rosanvallon's interpretation mirrors how community cohesion was introduced, such as when he speaks of the need to "reconstruct the social bond" (Rosanvallon 1995, 187).

Social exclusion in the republican context

The fit of the French social model to conventional classifications of welfare state regimes, such as to Esping-Andersen's (1990) influential conception of 'welfare worlds', is not our concern here. Neither are we primarily interested in the French trajectory, its particular brand of liberalism, neoliberalism or social democracy (see Prasad 2005 for a comprehensive discussion). Not even the republican self-conception, it has been suggested, is necessarily a useful conceptual tool for a precise understanding of French social policy. Republican ideals, however, serve as a point of reference with "nearly magical functions" (Révauger 2006, 117). They provide a frame of reference in political debate not despite of but for their very ambiguity. This section considers some elements of how republican principles have shaped perceptions of social solidarity and have been deployed in French presidential politics.

Ambiguities of solidarity

As an ideal, the republican self-conception contains the commitment to universalism that partially underpinned social exclusion discourse in the 1980s and 90s. Understood as instances of *exclusion sociale,* poverty or homelessness were portrayed as a scandal not just for how they caused human suffering, but for how they constituted a breach of the universalist promise. These conceptions are sustained by the idea of the republic as a particular space of connectedness, notably one where the state and its institutions are in charge of redeeming the promises of republican citizenship. In principle, the state has to make empirical realities, which usually involve a good deal of poverty or homelessness, live up to the rhetoric of republican universality (Silver 1994). Significantly, however, this commitment does not need to correspond to programmes of redistribution, welfare, or the material alleviation of poverty. Jacque Chirac's commitment to fighting *exclusion sociale* also fit a description of republican solidarity. It put emphasis on ideals of togetherness but suggested psychological and moral remedies. Republican solidarity constitutes an argumentative resource with considerable force, but one that is open to interpretation and allows for various prescriptions as to how ambiguous ideals should inform political practice.

The ambiguity of republican solidarity applies not only to positive conceptions of French solidarity, but also to its various problematisations. The binding ties of French society, its *liens sociaux,* have been seen to be at risk in different ways in French

political history. For example, where these ties were seen to be at risk, it is difficult, as Révauger (2006, 117) suggests, to separate an ethos of civic solidarity from cultural or ethno-national sentiments. In times of national crises, such as in 1871 or in the *Dreyfus* affair, definitions of republican belonging are usually difficult to distinguish for whether they rely on republican universalism or on ethno-cultural nationalism. Recent attempts to give French national identity a firmer grounding exemplify how the two themes intermingle, such as when Nicolas Sarkozy introduced a *grand débat* on French national identity and spoke of a "profound unity in our culture, and I dare say, in our civilization" (Sarkozy 2009). The potentials of national solidarity are open to be appropriated in different ways, by ethno-national parochialists, by moralizing Gaullists, by liberal reformists, as well as by the left.

Historically, this ambiguity informed the terms of French constitutions and provided a context for how political institutions, such as the office of the President of the Republic, have been defined. The constitution of the 4th Republic provided a strong commitment to the "solidarity and equality of all French people" notably by embracing a right to employment, strong representative rights for workers, and far-ranging social rights (Pickles 1955). Its interpretation of the requirements of republican solidarity mirrored widespread sentiments of post-war reconstruction in Europe. They could at this particular moment draw on a confluence of republican and socialist themes, where the collective appropriation of the political and economic centres of society became a priority. The Gaullist tradition in the 5th Republic, by contrast, proved more flexible in how it conceived of the unity the Republic. Rather than basing solidarity on redistribution and social rights, it focused on a moral unity of purpose. Chirac's appeal to *fracture sociale* can be understood within this tradition.

Presidential concerns

These understandings of republican solidarity have not meant that particular notions of social integration or cohesion were codified in the beginnings of the 5th Republic. Such concerns, we suggest, emerged in how political actors defined their roles in the political system. The concepts of social cohesion and social exclusion are both absent from the 1958 constitution. Here, France is defined as an "indivisible, secular, democratic and social republic" (Conseil Constitutionnel 1958). Article 5 defines the role of the President as being concerned with the "continuity of the state" the guarantee of

"national independence, of the integrity of the territory and of respect for treaties". Article 16 reaffirms the significance of "territorial integrity" and gives the President extraordinary powers for its safeguard in emergency situations. *Securité sociale* is written into various articles. Beyond this broad commitment, the concern for social affairs, however, remains an administrative and technical task that does not fit the intended purview of the supercharged presidency as it was introduced in 1958. In fact, the constitution does not envisage a significant role for the President of the Republic in relation to social matters. His role is to guarantee the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the French nation, sitting above mundane domestic affairs (Bell 2000).

This has not kept successive presidents from reinterpreting this role. In his New Year's address for 1961, Charles de Gaulle, for example, accorded a central place to the imperative of maintaining *cohésion nationale.* The occasion was the ultimately unsuccessful *coup d'état* of retired generals, led by Maurice Challe, in Algeria. In light of the Algerian war of independence, and recurrent domestic strife that had brought the 4th Republic to its collapse, de Gaulle stated that in light of "theoretical preferences, particular interests, partisan attachments", *cohésion nationale* had never been more necessary (De Gaulle 1960). It is not only the indivisibility of the territory, as it was introduced as a presidential concern in 1958, that Charles de Gaulle tried to capture, but the factionism and partisanship in French society. The addressees for his speech were most conspicuously the *pieds noir*, French-Algerian colonials and their political and military leadership and supporters in the army, who in the late 50s and early 60s fought a disruptive rearguard action against decolonialisation. In 1960/61, with the Fifth Republic in place, de Gaulle faced little problems quelling the right wing-insurrection against Algerian independence. However, in a situation where the 'indivisibility of the territory' was seen to depend on the resolution of internal strife, the domain of presidential concern could be extended from the preservation of national sovereignty towards that of national unity and social peace.

De Gaulle's interventions in the early 5th Republic illustrate how institutional ambiguities, as well as ambiguous understandings of national cohesion and social peace, facilitated new interpretations of political roles. This extension would proceed and take on new forms in the course of the 1970s and 80s. In 1986, faced with an opposing majority in the *Assemblée Nationale*, François Mitterand directly claimed presidential responsibility for the guarantee of *cohésion sociale* (David 2004). This was at a time

when a supra-national rhetoric of *cohésion*, not least under the influence of French officials in Strasbourg and Brussels, had emerged and when the Single European Act introduced the notion of social cohesion as a European objective (see Atkinson 2008). Clearly, social concerns had become more salient in political debate (Cole 2006, 100). Faced with the unprecedented situation of *cohabitation*, Mitterand's claim of responsibility for cohesion was not least a symbolic sign of his unwillingness to yield the domain of social concerns to the Gaullist majority in the National Assembly and to the liberal Prime Minister Jacques Chirac (Cole 1997, 41-2). Mitterand publicly received railway workers that were on strike against the reformist economic policies of Chirac, who had not discovered his moralizing inclinations at this point (Noblecourt 1995).[56]

The office of the president, Mitterand's intervention implied, needed to be concerned with more than the sovereign indivisibility of the French territory that was constitutionally mandated, but also with the indivisibility of its social fabric. This extension of the domain of presidential concern from sovereignty to social solidarity proved to be of significance. At the moment when, due to *cohabitation*, the president's control over social matters decreased dramatically, Mitterand's intervention had the effect of creating a symbolic counterpoint to the alleged irresponsibility of Prime Minister Jacques Chirac's legislative agenda of liberal economic reform. Its destructiveness could be contrasted with the impartial concern of the president watching over and working towards social unity. The introduction of *cohésion sociale* as a political and presidential concern in the 1980s thus owes to the peculiar distribution of governmental roles and powers. In this manner, Mitterand had introduced a template that Chirac would follow in the period that is of concern in this chapter.[57]

56 Chirac showed some appreciation of this episode and later suggested that in 1986 he started to understand the possibilities of the presidency (Gurrey 2007).

57 The similarity of the president's role in safeguarding the 'continuity of the state' and the new rhetoric vis-à-vis social affairs is instructive. Jean-Baptiste de Foucauld, head of the *Commissariat Général du Plan* (CGP) (cited in Colombani 1993) remarked that exclusion "has to be considered as a veritable internal threat and treated with the same mobilization of forces as external threats." Not just as an emergency response vis-à-vis threats, but also regarding 'softer' remedies, there is an interesting convergence between international and domestic concerns. This is conspicuous, for example, in the "urgent humanitarian action" that was seen to be required in the fight against *exclusion sociale* as well as in the role of experts of international aid (Xavier Emmanuelli of *Médecins sans frontières* for example) in the formulation of social policy programmes.

Two dimensions of exclusion

Around the time of the first cohabitation (1986-8) social exclusion had not been operationalized in a way that would make *fracture sociale* appear a convincing response to the problems at hand. The two discourses of social exclusion that Chirac artfully connected in 1995, one based on and concerned with material social problems, the other psychologistic, emotive and moralizing, would only be developed in the late 1980s and early 90s. In the following, we consider and reconstruct those two understandings of *exclusion sociale*.

Exclusion and the psychic disposition of the French

Structural transformations in the French economy since the mid-1970s, we have suggested, were seen to have brought about a new social question. Such transformations have also been captured with the notion of the *trente glorieuses*, the thirty years of growth and prosperity after the Second World War, that, with the economic crisis in the early 1970s, were seen to have come to an end.

The notion of Thirty Glorious Years has become somewhat of a commonplace in French political discourse. It was coined by Jean Fourastié (1979) in his *Les Trente Glorieuses ou la révolution invisible*. Fourastié's account went beyond a description of socio-economic change. He was concerned with the adverse effects of this change on the psychic dispositions of the French population. In particular, Fourastié pointed to the sense of entitlement that had allegedly emerged in a situation of post-war prosperity. This sense was expressed by Fourastié called *morosité*, an emotional and psychological dislocation that was seen to have occurred as a result of frustrated expectations. Such frustrations are expressed in a sense of uncertainty: "People today, and in particular adolescents, are characterized by an instability that leads them to pass from vague and undefined hopes … to the fear of a world that is immense and brutal" (Fourastié 1979, 246).

These emotional and psychological disruptions had led to an inability to cope with structural change. The problem with the *trente glorieuses* is not merely that the "easy times are over" (Fourastié 1979, 255), but that they have left a fatal and immobilizing imprint on the French collective psyche. Fourastié (1979, 268-9) suggested as much, namely that "we have slowly neglected and then forgotten the real conditions of

happiness: individual efforts, a coherent, realistic and friendly (*chaleureuse*) conception of the world, of life and of the human condition."

To some extent, this diagnosis corresponds to a more general discourse of declining national standing that resembles the "post-colonial melancholia" that Paul Gilroy (2004) sees at work in Britain.[58] Whether it is the structural transformation of the French economy and pressures on the welfare state, or a sense of cultural or moral decline: problems are considered to be the result of a psychological blockade and this feeling of *immobilisme* is introduced as a result of collective delusions in face of changing global realities.

In 1995, this recollection of the *trente glorieuses* informed the rhetoric of Chirac's campaign. With regard to the security and prosperity of the 1960s and 70s, he suggested that

> this society doesn't exist anymore. The one of the 90s is moving, fractioned. It needs to be managed by letting go of old reflexes (*en faisant table rase des vieux reflexes*). The intellectual effort that is needed for this renewal is considerable: it doesn't come from technicians. It is the role of the political power to bring it about without ignoring the burdens of entrenched habits and psychological resistance. (Chirac 1994, 41)

Chirac's appeal to *exclusion sociale* thus channelled a sense of loss that was expressed in the recollection of post-war prosperity. Chirac captured this loss with his reference to *fracture sociale* and defined this social rift in relation to a sense of uncertainty and confusion allegedly pervading the French population. This loss, he suggested, had debilitating consequences and led to uncertainty and *immobilisme*, a prominent motif of Chirac's rhetoric (1994; 2007, 81, 219, 230, 272, etc.). Exclusion, defined in relation to this sense of uncertainty, differed considerably from an understanding that drew attention to tangible situations of social marginalization, poverty or homelessness. For Chirac, feeling "un peu exclus" (Chirac cited in Le Monde 1995) was a characteristic condition of all French people, whether they were socially marginalized or not. It manifested itself, he suggested, in a resistance to embrace social change and in general social inactivity.

58 Gilroy suggests that elusive ideas about national grandeur are channeled into a regressive parochialism. This analysis can to seen to apply to the recent *grand débat* on French national identity, prominently driven by Nicolas Sarkozy (2009) and Eric Besson (2009), who pointed to reinvigorated patriotism as a remedy to a widespread sentiment of national decline.

Exclusion and 'urgent humanitarian action'

A second discourse of social exclusion dates back to the 1970s when it was defined, largely, in conjunction with the discovery of a 'new social question' (Paugam 1996; Goguel d'Allondans 2003). Its introduction was marked by a certain surprise about how, even in situations of full employment, unprecedented wealth, expansive welfare programmes and new entitlements, parts of the population remained on the social margins. Different from the more encompassing definition propagated by Chirac, *les exclus* are conceived as those within remaining 'pockets' of poverty. This is, for example, the suggestion of René Lenoir who pioneered this perspective of the concept in relation to variously marginalized people (*inadaptés*) who were for various reasons unable to make use of the benefits of majority society (Lenoir 1974). While this perspective thus conceived of *exclusion sociale* in terms of certain deficits, and frequently pointed to the chronic misadaptation of the excluded, those deficits were largely considered to be beyond their control and did not invite ascriptions of guilt; in any case, the Republican ideal of solidarity was seen to require a collective effort towards bringing them into the fold of the welfare state.

This perspective on exclusion was thus conceived in the 1970s (Lenoir 1974; Stoleru 1974) and, in the 1980s, become a wide-spread frame of reference for various human consequences of unemployment and poverty (Milano 1988; Boitte 1989). Within this tradition, the concern with new constellations of social problems also underpinned the development of a new vocabulary of social marginality, including *exclusion sociale*, *grande exclusion, grande pauvreté, nouveau pauvreté* or *précarité* (Barbier 2005).[59] Various policy reports, such as by the government's policy planning unit, the *Commissariat general du plan* (e.g, 1992), defined such notions for political use. Policy initiatives in the 1980s and early 1990s were introduced as a response to this perspective on exclusion, most significantly the 1988 *Revenue mimimum d'insertion* (RMI), an income aimed at those of working age without access to unemployment benefits.

Non-governmental organizations proposed similar understandings of social exclusion and defined a new vocabulary of social marginality to pressure governments into considering the situation of the 'new poor'. Joseph Wresinski, founder of *ATD Quart*

59 The prefix *grande* generally refers to the persistent and irreversible condition of the situation.

Monde (ATD Fourth World), a Catholic priest with a record of social work in areas of extreme poverty, was particularly significant and influential.[60] Wresinski authored a report for the *Conseil Économique et Social* (Economic and Social Council), entitled *Grande pauvreté et précarité économique et sociale* that defined terms as follows:

> *Précarité* is the absence of one of several securities, notably that of employment, which allows person and families to assume their professional, social or familial obligations and to enjoy their fundamental rights. The resultant insecurity can be more or less extensive and can have more or less severe or definitive consequences. It leads to *grande pauvreté* when it affects multiple dimensions of existence, becomes persistent, and compromises the chances to reassume responsibilities and to reacquire one's rights in the foreseeable future. (Conseil Économique et Social 1987, 6)

Wresinski was particularly concerned with what can be considered as the 'empowerment' of socially marginalized populations. His proposition was that policies should not merely be targeted at groups or individuals, but that in order to avoid disenfranchisement and paternalism, excluded populations should be included, not only materially through policies towards their *insertion* but also by drawing on their contribution to the political consultation on measures directed at them. Moreover, Wresinski made the case that inclusion must not be understood as beneficence but as the redemption of a fundamental obligation owed, within a republican framework and beyond, to fellow citizens as a fundamental human right: "French society must progress towards a society of human rights where civil and political rights but also economic, social and cultural rights are more and more respected" (Conseil Économique et Social 1987, 8).

Wresinski's report became a significant frame of reference for a particular understanding that conceived of social exclusion as a scandal in relation to a republican notion of solidarity and that envisaged initiatives towards a rights-based access to full participation. Commentators have pointed to some problems in ATD's approach towards *exclusion*. Jean-Paul Révauger (1998, 35) suggests that: "Thanks to ATD, the excluded speak out but they do not say very much, and especially nothing terribly political, which brings us back to the old 19th century debate on the role of intellectuals, or at least articulate people in popular organizations." Despite such inconsistencies in the ATD account, the idea that exclusion required urgent mobilization of various social

60 ATD stands for *Aide à toute détresse*, translatable as 'aid against destitution', though it is sometimes anglicised as 'all together for dignity'.

actors, that it cast a shadow on ideals of republican solidarity, and that remedies had to 'empower' disadvantaged populations turned out to be influential accounts in the 1980s and 1990s. [61]

We have identified two understandings of social exclusion that were both conspicuous around the time of the presidential campaign of 1995. On the one hand, a psychological and moral crisis was seen to require a *humane touch* and the provision of moral orientation and proximity. The crisis of social marginality, on the other hand, was seen to require urgent humanitarian action. While Chirac's definition of *fracture sociale* drew strongly on elements of the first understanding, he remained open to the second and committed himself in the campaign to a struggle against various dimensions of social deprivation. The minister that was put in charge of the development of the first public policy imitative that was intended to counter the social rift was Xavier Emmanuelli, one of the co-founders of *Médicins sans frontières* and an executive of *SAMU Sociale*, an emergency service for homeless people. As part of his portfolio, Emmanuelli was to be concerned with "urgent humanitarian action" (*l'action humanitaire d'urgence*). He and various representatives of ATD contributed to the consultation on the political response to social exclusion in between 1995 and 1997.

The politics of *fracture sociale*

We have already suggested that, in Chirac's usage, *fracture sociale* allegedly manifested itself as a crisis that went beyond empirically discernible constellations of social problems. It was experienced as a loss of certainty and, in particular among young people, as disorientation. Uncertainty and disorientation were said to precipitate anger and, potentially, violence. Lack of confidence and disorientation, in turn, led to "immobility" (Chirac quoted in Biffaud and Mauduit 1995). All this, finally, put social cohesion at risk. Established recipes of social reform, as they had been proposed by the technocratic elites, hadn't worked. Chirac suggested that "we face a social emergency (*état d'urgence sociale*); we need a different logic to counter such tendencies and to put France back on a path towards the future. This is a question of political willpower" (Chirac 1994).

61 While Wresinski died in 1988, his successor, Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz participated in the consultation on 'social cohesion law' of 1997, where she attempted to focus the debate on these dimensions (de Gaulle-Anthonioz 1997).

The reference to a social state of emergency and to a moral crisis became guiding themes of Chirac's electoral rhetoric. In the following section, we consider the attempts of 1995-97 to devise a social policy agenda in response to the concept of *fracture sociale.*

The Loi Cohésion Sociale in 1997

In May 1995, Chirac's Prime Minister, Alain Juppé, proclaimed a "new republican pact" for the fight against exclusion in the National Assembly (Ferenczi 1995). Authorized to develop social policies in response to *fracture social*, Juppé highlighted four dimensions that had to be addressed: unemployment, homelessness, problems in the *banlieues*, and improvements in the quality of life for elderly people (Juppé 1995). The adoption of the law was envisaged for October 1995, and Bertrand Fragonard, the civil servant that had been in charge of the introduction of the *Revenu minimum d'insertion* was assigned with its development.

However, the initiative occurred against the background of changing priorities. In particular a new concern with the national debt, as a result of the convergence criteria for entry into the European Monetary Union, interfered with the priority of tackling *fracture sociale*. Moreover, the *Plan Juppé*, the reform of social welfare and pensions envisaged a reduction of expenditure levels, was met by widespread opposition and became the occasion for the single largest strike action since May 1968 (Bezat and de Montvalon 1996; Bernard 2005, 99). In his campaign, Chirac had accused Édouard Balladur of blindly pushing through economic reforms without considering their impact on the "emotional" state of society (Jarreau 1996). This now seemed to apply to his own government.

These concomitant circumstances marked the context of deliberations on the law against exclusion. It became clear that little additional funding would be available and this was seen to put a doubt on costly measures, such as in relation to homelessness and housing, Before propositions were tabled in the National Assembly and the French Senate, the measures were debated within the administration. In difficult circumstances, the ambiguity of social exclusion was revealed when different actors began to struggle over the scope of the intended remedies. Bertrand Fragonard was instructed to develop the law for the Minster of Labour and Social Affairs, Jacques Barrot. In addition, however, Xavier Emmannuelli was instructed to develop a more holistic approach in line with his

portfolio of 'urgent humanitarian action'. He considered the propositions by Fragonard and Barrot to be too half-hearted, technocratic, and not quite in line with the scale of the problem. Emmanuelli benefited from a direct rapport with Jacques Chirac and eventually went public in mid-1996, when he revealed that two distinct approaches existed. This caused considerable embarrassment to Barrot, who was portrayed as uncommitted in the fight against exclusion (Fenoglio and Garin 1997). Barrot favoured a perspective that would not emphasize humanitarian concerns but entail a limited set of policy measures to address issues of unemployment and homelessness (Le Monde 1996). Emmanuelli, by contrast, considered his objective as to work towards the re-definition of social solidarity and, taking Juppé's proclamation seriously, towards a "new republican pact" (Castaing 1996a). The initiatives that would have to be developed, he suggested, should not only address individual concerns but work towards a reinvigoration of *cohésion sociale* (Castaing 1996b).

Pierre-André Périssol, the minister for housing, spelt out this position. The problem, as he put it in a way that was reminiscent of Chirac's rhetoric in 1995, was "fear of the future" and a "collective lack of self-confidence":

> What we want is a communal project that reconstitutes social cohesion, which has been threatened, and to rekindle the republican state. Without strong social cohesion, there will be no trust in our society… Our sense of equality makes us refuse an Anglo-Saxon model where prosperity for some means poverty (*précarisation*) for others. Our sense of liberty leads us to reject a situation where the potential of men and women goes wasted. Our ideal of fraternity means that we cannot accept that men and women are not at the centre of our politics. … For this politics towards reinforced social cohesion, the state needs to be the guarantor. But [it needs to be] a reformed state (*état rehabilitée*) that draws its authority from its determination to act, its legitimacy from its capacity to pursue reforms, its recognition of the nature of its interventions from dialogue and the heart (*coeur*). (Perissol 1996)

This commitment to the human touch, to an *état humaniste*, was restated in an environment where the perceived necessity for fiscal austerity did not permit expansive welfare politics. In particular in Perissol's own department, ambitious measures were quickly off the table in the consultation process about the intended initiatives (Fenoglio 1996). In this light, Emmanuelli himself began to revise earlier commitments: "I don't think that the state can continue to attend to everything. The struggle against exclusion depends on initiatives by everybody. … If the people continue to turn exclusively towards the state nothing will change" (quoted in Fernoglio 1996). The concern with

"urgent humanitarian action" and the objective to establish a "new republican pact" were being amended with notions of activation and self-reliance. Accordingly, when in 1997 a set of measures were tabled at the National Assembly, Xavier Emmanuelli (1997) introduced the initiative: "All actors of social life need to collaborate to give our society a sense of humanity that it has lost so often." The motivation was to "tackle the problem of exclusion in its entirety" (Emmanuelli 1997). This, however, meant that "the state cannot and should not do everything. It is the actors of social life that need to work together to give our society the sense of humanity that it has lost so often" (ibid.).

Coinciding with the reinterpretation of humanitarian concern as requiring collective social activity, the headline title for the initiative was changed. *Exclusion sociale* disappeared and was substituted by a *loi d'orientation relatif au renforcement de la cohésion sociale* (Fenoglio and Garin 1997). The law, however, remained caught up in ambiguities of the concept of social exclusion. It remained unclear whether it was intended as a limited effort to improve the situation of some marginalised people, or a more wide-ranging attempt to build a more inclusive society (Fernoglio, Garin and Monnot 1997).

Towards the final days of the consultation and immediately before the law was due to be tabled for a vote, Geneviève de Gaulle-Anthonioz of *ATD Quatre Monde* spoke at the National Assembly. De Gaulle-Anthonioz commanded considerable authority for her own biography, as a niece of the General de Gaulle and a survivor of Ravensbrück where she had been imprisoned for her role in the resistance. She argued that it was necessary "to conceive of this struggle against poverty (*grande pauvreté*) as a struggle for human rights" (de Gaulle-Anthonioz 1997). This also meant that, in response to a frequent criticism, not legislating on behalf of *les exclus* but to consider the experiences of the excluded, to hear them express themselves "how they live and what they want for themselves and for society" (ibid.). De Gaulle-Anthonioz remarked that little in the present legislation matched these priorities.

While a significant number of amendments to the social cohesion law had not even been debated in parliament, Jacques Chirac's dissolution of the National Assembly on 21 April 1997 put an end to the legislative process and effectively killed off the law (Monnot 1997; Monnot and De Montvalon 1997). In his speech justifying the dissolution, Chirac reverted to issues that he had raised in 1995. In preparation for the

accession to the European Monetary Union, a new *élan* was needed: "Together we need to reaffirm our values and … and our moral points of reference. Together we need to say clearly what society we want to live in." He sought to locate this project in the context of a third way between "laisser-faire" and "reliance on the state".

> I suggest that we follow a different path. What I suggest is the ideal of our Republic. Rights that are adamantly defended, and first of all the right to dignity and [social] protection for every man, women and child. Duties and responsibilities that are being assumed that correspond to these rights. A reinforced social cohesion. That is the defence of our republican order. That is a more peaceful society (*une société appaisée*), that anticipates problems and surmounts them through dialogue and communication. This is the recovery of a moral politics with leaders that provide an example. (Chirac 1997)

Chirac's RPR lost the subsequent election. The incoming Socialist government of Lionel Jospin adopted a far-ranging social policy programme that included measures in the area of employment, housing, against indebtedness and for a minimum wage (Fabre, Fenoglio and Garin 1998; Clift 2001). This *grande loi* reverted back to a language of *exclusion sociale*. Commenting retrospectively, Xavier Emmanuelli remarked that this conceptual change had been indicative of a profoundly different emphasis. The Socialist's 'law against exclusion', he suggested, had been targeted at economic processes, unemployment and welfare. Emmanuelli suggested that it had nothing to offer to address the more immaterial uncertainty and disorientation that Chirac had invoked and that his initiatives towards *cohésion sociale* had intended to provide (Emmanuelli and Frémontier 2002, para. 10).

In the botched 'social cohesion law' of 1997, the ambiguities of the concept of social exclusion and its various horizons of meaning, became conspicuous. Funding constraints stood in the way of adopting costly measures of social reform. However, a more minimalist approach that would have entailed policy measures to address isolated problems was considered inadequate, in particular when compared to the expectations that Chirac's rhetoric of *fracture sociale* had raised. A certain adaptation that was made to the established concern with 'proximity' and 'humane concern' offered a way out of this double bind. The conceptual change from *exclusion* towards *cohésion sociale* was accompanied by a new emphasis on the need for collective activity to achieve cohesion. The 'actors of social life', Emmanuelli suggested, needed to come together to create a more humane society. Whereas, earlier, *immobilisme* had been considered to result from

disorientation and anxiety, this equation was now amended so that mobility and collective activity appeared as necessary remedies to achieve social cohesion.

The Plan Borloo in 2004/5

Lionel Jospin's term as Prime Minister came to an end with the presidential elections of 2002. Jean-Marie Le Pen eliminated Jospin in the first round, and Chirac, benefiting from the rallying of all parties except for the *Front National* behind his candidacy, carried the second round with 82% of the vote. The subsequent elections to the National Assembly yielded a majority for the newly founded *Union pour la majorité presidentielle* (UMP), which in name and by design was meant to prevent a repetition of cohabitation. Jean-Pierre Raffarin, who had already held the office of Prime Minister (*Raffarin I*) in the aftermath of Jospin's defeat, was confirmed.

In the regional elections of 2004, the UMP lost control of all French regions except Alsace and Corsica. Jacques Chirac reshuffled portfolios and ministers (from *Raffarin II* to *Raffarin III*) and proclaimed a new emphasis on social affairs. He stated that:

> I have heard what the French have said. That is why I have asked the government to suspend the reform of ASS (*mesure relative à l'ASS*). A law for the mobilisation to work is being prepared by the minister of social cohesion, Jean-Louis Borloo, and allows us to take up the issues in their logical form. And that with a principal objective that it is to better help, to better accompany the unemployed in their return to work and to find work again, an activity. (Chirac 2004a)

ASS, *Allocation spécifique de solidarité*, was a measure that made available funds for unemployed whose eligibility for benefits had expired. In 2003, *Raffarin II* had introduced cost-cutting measures in this area, amounting to roughly 400 million Euros. These propositions, as well as other social reform measures introduced to cut social funding, had turned out to be vastly unpopular (Cahuc and Kramarz 2004; Sterdyniak 2004). In 2004, the political agenda of the government seemed caught up in between priorities towards economic liberalisation and social priorities, *cap liberal* and *cap sociale* (Beuve-Mérz and Delhommais 2004; Le Figaro 2004). Chirac's speech was significant for how it seemed to indicate a new emphasis on the latter, which appeared as a return to erstwhile concerns with *fracture sociale*. In the speech, Chirac (2004b) thus introduced a new "absolute priority' of working towards *cohésion sociale*.

Social cohesion had been less and less defined in relation to *grande pauvreté*. Compared to the mid-1990s, marginality, impoverishment or homelessness had lost some of their urgency, and seemed to be less present as social concerns that required legislative efforts. In 2004, social cohesion and questions of republican solidarity were discussed in particular in relation to unemployment, and with an emphasis on assisting the unemployed in the transition to work (Ministère de l'emploi 2004). This was the concern of the *Plan Borloo*, or *loi de programmation pour la cohésion sociale*, that was adopted in 2005 (Ministère de l'emploi 2005a). As part of the "absolute priority" that Chirac envisaged for this relaunch of a social agenda *cohésion sociale* was defined in relation to unemployment. It was suggested that "working towards *cohésion sociale*, also means working to assure the dynamism and the economic competitiveness of our country in the coming years" (Chirac 2004b). Jean-Louis Borloo was put in charge of this social programme.

Similarly to Xavier Emmanuelli, Jean-Louis Borloo was perceived as a political outsider with a practitioner's background (Loré 1993). He had a distinguished career as a corporate lawyer, as president of Valenciennes Football Club and, building on this achievement, as mayor of Valenciennes, a transitional town in the North of France facing deindustrialization (Guélaud 2004a). He was widely credited with having distinguished himself in supporting the commercial development of the city.

In 2003, while he was still president of the wider Valenciennes *agglomération*, he accompanied Chirac on a visit to town (Guiral 2003). Borloo, who became minister for Housing in *Raffarin II*, was particularly eager to attach himself to Chirac's humanitarian commitments. Upon his visit to Valenciennes, Chirac had spoken about "making cities more human" (*rendre la ville plus humaine*) (Hassoux 2003). Chirac, who had largely abandoned *fracture sociale* as a theme, picked it up again in Valenciennes: "These dramatic difficulties, this social rift (*fracture sociale*) that threatens to expand into a urban, ethnic and sometimes even religious rift (*fracture urbaine, ethnique, religieuse*) are not inevitable" (Chirac 2007, 137). Concerted action – not necessarily "urgent humanitarian action" – could prevent *fracture social*. The idea of this rift, however, was no longer loosely connected to ambiguous understandings of social exclusion but to the disintegrative effects of unemployment. Unemployment, as Chirac (2007, 131) put it in Valenciennes, was seen to endanger *cohésion nationale*.

Preventive action and the mobilisation of society to avert this threat were introduced as a priority, and Borloo was presented as the man for the job (Jakubyszyn 2004). His perspective seemed to be in tune with the social relaunch, and Borloo benefited from the reshuffle of the cabinet and from its renewed focus on social affairs. On 1 April 2004, he was appointed head of a *grand ministère*, a superministry for social cohesion, including the Ministry of Labour (Gurrey 2004). Spelling out his agenda, Borloo announced a *grand juillet social* (de Montvalon 2004), a month of social mobilization. He introduced his plans as follows:

> We do not need to change our focus; we simply need to follow the roadmap set out by the President. He has reaffirmed the absolute necessity of the mobilisation for social cohesion. … Our mission today is clear: restore social and republican cohesion. (cited in Tabard 2004)

This "battle to restore social cohesion" (ibid.) evoked some of the same ambiguities that had characterised the propositions of 1997. The policies at stake were largely piecemeal and targeted at labour market and welfare reform (Dorival 2008). While some actors downplayed the scope of these initiatives and raised concerns regarding budgetary constraints, others were eager to raise expectations and to portray the policies as a fundamental shift in the French social model. Borloo was in particular pitted against the Finance Minister, Nicolas Sarkozy and Bernard Accoyer, president of the parliamentary UMP group (Guélaud and Jakubyszyn 2004). Accoyer contradicted Borloo: there was "no social turn" and the new measures provided "continuity of governmental action", a continuity that consisted in how the new measures were guided by the objective of a "return to activity" (de Montvalon 2004).

Jean-Louis Borloo, by contrast, introduced his measures as a fundamental departure from existing notions of social solidarity. He pointed to the anachronism of the French social model and in particular to the notion that the state could intervene to enforce social cohesion. This was no longer an option, he suggested, and a "radical change of approach and method" (cited in Baudet and Marti 2004) was needed (Borloo 2004a; 2004b). The *Plan Borloo* was unveiled on 30 June 2004. Its measures were particularly concerned with employment, equality of opportunities and housing (Le Monde 2004). The plan made available one billion Euros in 2005, and more than three billion until 2007.

The priority of *cohésion sociale* in the *Plan Borloo* was put in a conditional relationship to economic growth: “no durable growth without national and social cohesion” (Borloo cited in Guélaud 2004a). A more flexible labour market, more movement and activity were introduced as priorities not only for the achievement of more social mobility but also to boost the French economy (Rollot 2004). These priorities also meant that *cohésion sociale* became further decoupled from social marginality and *grande pauvreté* and more linked to the dualism of competitiveness and cohesion, as it had also increasingly informed European Union priorities with the Lisbon Agenda (Daly 2006).

The *Plan Borloo* was met with some criticism. In an editorial, *Le Monde* embraced the plan but criticized its limited scale that was not seen to correspond to high expectations that had been raised in the rhetoric of a “social relaunch” (Le Monde 2004). The Socialists accused Borloo of “window-dressing” (Fabius 2004). Even from within the UMP, there were complaints on how the plan disregarded local interests and local expertise and generally paid scant attention to the actual and protracted social problems in urban France that had been characteristic of previous efforts to address, for example, *exclusion sociale* (Grossmann and Keller 2004). A further criticism was that it envisaged the institutionalization of a low-wage sector: it provided a cover for measures with “profoundly unequal” (Rousseau and Devetter 2005) results.

What distinguished the more recent initiatives were new motives, in particular the reference to the economically positive effects of heightened cohesion. Where the failed initiatives of 1997 had maintained a connection to an understanding of social exclusion that pointed towards social marginalization, this link had been severed. Activation was not understood to be about social enfranchisement, as it had been advocated by *ATD Quart Monde*. The new initiatives envisaged in particular to facilitate and accelerate the transition from unemployment towards employment. As it was put in the new ‘social cohesion law’, there was an “absolute priority of the return to activity, the best recipe against social implosion and the key for individual dignity” (Ministère de l'emploi 2004, 3). The need to turn from social assistance towards activity was highlighted (ibid., 4). While measures envisaged were still introduced as part of a more fundamental reorientation, such as by “redesigning social relations” (Ministère de l'emploi 2005b, 2), the new concern with *cohésion sociale* was, mostly, to outline and implement activation in labour market policies.

Émeutes 2005

The movement of debate from 'urgent humanitarian action' towards labour market measures represents a conspicuous development among social policy objectives and how they were couched in French political discourse. A language of exclusion and cohesion in 1997, and of cohesion in 2004/5, allowed for the proposition of disparate political objectives. Ambitions that were pursued with elements of the same kind of conceptual framework had clearly changed. Jacques Donzelot (2006, 3) has made a suggestion for how these changes can be understood. He has argued that *cohésion sociale* supplanted previously prominent political objectives, notably a commitment to *progrès social* (social progress). While the state was considered "as the guarantor or custodian of social progress", its political role now is "to incite civil society to produce cohesion in a competitive environment" (2006, 11). This observation is corroborated by the response of Jacques Chirac and the Raffarin government to the unrest in the *banlieues* in 2005, which we briefly consider in this section.

When he defined *fracture sociale* in 1994 and 95, Jacques Chirac had addressed the situation in the *banlieues*, and how the uncertainty and disorientation that he identified had the potential to lead to particularly troubling conflict there:

> In the disadvantaged *banlieues* a soft terror reigns *(terreur molle)*. When too many young people cannot see any future beyond unemployment or permanent internships, they end up revolting. Up to now, the state struggles to maintain order and the social mitigation of unemployment prevents the worst. But until when? (Chirac 1994, 47)

The beginning of the implementation of the *Plan Borloo* in 2005 coincided with a spate of urban unrest, starting on 27 October in Clichy-sous-Bois, Seine-Saint-Denis, and spreading throughout France. Three teenagers, two of whom died subsequently, were electrocuted in a transformer while on the run from police. The allegation was that they were driven into the facility and offered neither help nor rescue by pursuing police officers. The unrest that unfolded over the following weeks occurred against the background of a concern with policing in the *banlieues*, which was considered to be heavy-handed and militarized (see Schneider 2008). The unrest further seemed to highlight the scale of the problems faced in urban agglomerations on the outskirts of French city centres, where large numbers of French citizens of North African or Sub-Saharan descent were experiencing high levels of unemployment and poor access to the benefits enjoyed by majority society (Wacquant 2006). *Grande exclusion*, in the

meaning that Joseph Wresinski had given to the term and that had been a prominent concern of the 1990s, had been seen to refer in particular to the conditions faced by the inhabitants of the *banlieues*. Clichy-sous-Bois remains the most deprived area within the Seine-Saint-Denis department, with high levels of unemployment, poverty and lack of public infrastructure (Giblin 2006, 79).

The unrest proved to be an occasion for some of the protagonists of the recently adopted social cohesion initiatives to provide their respective accounts of the events. Nicolas Sarkozy, Minister of the Interior in 2005, followed a line of law and order populism. Sarkozy had not been part of the *cap social* or a supporter of the *Plan Borloo*. Uncommitted to Chirac's social agenda, he had little stake in explaining the events in a way that would fit the presidential social policy paradigm. Already before the unrest, he had found himself in various situations where his statements had caused offence, but had also garnered considerable support. In June 2005, Sarkozy had proposed to 'steam-clean' (*nettoyer au Kärcher*) a neighbourhood with recurrent disorder in the neighbourhood La Courneuve, north-eastern Paris. A few days before the incidents in Clichy-sous-Bois, in Argenteuil, north-western Paris, Sarkozy referred to a group of local people as 'scum' (*racaille*) (Le Guen 2005). In the immediate response to the unrest in October and early November, he spoke of the need to bring the force of the law to bear on the *banlieues* and of *zéro tolerance* (Sarkozy 2005).

Jean-Louis Borloo, by contrast, followed a line that Jacques Chirac would later adopt in his delayed effort to put the events into perspective (Chirac 2005a). Borloo highlighted the need for 'respect' and for a proper investigation of the situation leading to the violence and, more broadly, of the conditions in the disadvantaged *banlieues*: "we need patience, tenacity, not to be discouraged, even in the face of such crises. That's why the *plan de cohésion sociale* is a five year plan" (Borloo 2005). Chirac, whom it took more than two weeks to make a statement on the *émeutes*, equally pointed to the social policy record of his governments: "an important effort [to improve the situation in the *banlieues*] has been adopted over the last three years. Before too, but especially in the last three years" (Chirac 2005a). Presumably, Chirac pointed to the policy initiatives of *Raffarin I-III*, and not to *fracture sociale* 1995-1997. In fact, the appeal to *fracture sociale* or the concept of *cohésion sociale* remained largely absent in how representatives of government referred to the 2005 unrest.

Sarkozy's response in particular appeared to be at odds with earlier accounts of *grande exclusion* or *pauvreté*. He portrayed the causes of the unrest as lying in the thuggishness of the rioters. Problems in the *banlieues*, it was his suggestion, were not problematic for how they challenged republican ideals of solidarity. *Émeutes* should be suppressed with a police and criminal justice response. His reference to *racaille* seemed to imply that those labelled should be considered as outside of the fold of republican citizenship; their exclusion would not need to be understood as a challenge to republican ideas of solidarity (Sarkozy 2005).

Chirac, less than two years before the end of his second term, characteristically straddled between two orientations and two understandings of what republican solidarity required. He seemed to rebuke Sarkozy by suggesting that in "politics the choice of words is obviously essential", and that "in France all citizens are sons and daughters of the republic." However, he supported his Minister of the Interior when he suggested that "if someone commits an offence or a crime, this is an offender or a criminal. This is what the law says. These are the terms that we need to use. This is the republic" (Chirac 2005b).

The theme of republican solidarity, as it had been deployed in response to earlier understandings of the scandal of social exclusion, was thus considered to be, at most, only partially applicable to the conditions in the *banlieues*. What remained for Chirac, it seems, was an expression of humane concern ("sons and daughters of the republic"), an expression that neither in 1995 nor in 2005 needed to be accompanied by practical measures towards addressing material inequalities, social dislocations, poverty or homelessness. Emmanuel Todd (2005), by contrast, who was widely credited with having coined *fracture sociale*, commented that he did not "see anything in the events themselves that separates the children of immigrants from the rest of society. I see the exact opposite. I interpret the events as a refusal of marginalisation."[62]

62 Some right-wing commentators now consider *fracture sociale* as the concept with which "the left, but not only the left, has sought to understand the causes of this violence [of the 2005 *émeutes*]" (Giblin 2006, 84). Clearly, the notion can be traced to Jacques Chirac, and the government of Lionel Jospin and Martine Aubry 1997-2002 presented its social objectives by drawing on the concept of *exclusion* and not on *fracture sociale.* However, there is a discontinuity between Chirac and Sarkozy, for how the latter has been more prepared to point to cultures of violence, the misadaptation of young blacks and North Africans and their religious identities to explain the *émeutes*.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have considered aspects of recent French political history. Changing conceptions of the integrity of the nation and its territory, the role of the presidency in safeguarding national cohesion and the extension of its purview towards the domestic inside are significant developments. Rather than offering an encompassing account, this chapter has provided snapshots of changing priorities. It has explored conceptions of social exclusion and social cohesion and how these changed over time and informed political initiatives.

We have suggested that ambiguities of *exclusion sociale*, as they were evident in the rhetoric of the 1994/5 election, allowed for this concept to be defined in various ways. One the one hand, it was seen to entail concerns with social justice and material inequality. It corresponded, on the other hand, to the perception of a moral crisis and to the suggestion that a lack of social proximity and humane connectedness constituted a social malaise. Jacques Chirac made strategic use of these ambiguities. Moreover, in the development of the social agendas of his governments, and with the introduction of *cohésion sociale*, earlier concerns with "urgent humanitarian action" were reinterpreted. New orientations put emphasis on social activity. In 2004/5, the concept of *cohésion sociale* was used to substantiate policy instruments towards activation in the labour market. Previous objectives, such as those that suggested addressing exclusion as a matter of "humanitarian concern", became more marginal. Conspicuously, we have suggested that such understandings of *exclusion sociale* were not drawn on to provide an explanation of the unrest in 2005 or of the experience of socio-economic marginality that is characteristic of some of the *banlieues*.

These conceptual changes signal a shift of political objectives. Reinterpretations of social exclusion coincided with a new understanding of the requirements of republican solidarity. The shift was away from urgent humanitarian action and towards social cohesion. Where the goal of policy making with reference to the former understanding of social exclusion was to reduce inequality and to provide marginalized people with a voice, the concern with the concept of *cohésion sociale* has been to heighten individual activity in particular in the labour market.[63] Whereas the former put emphasis on the

63 Xavier Emmanuelli, Chirac's minister for 'urgent humanitarian action' 1995-7, recently announced that he would leave his post as an executive of *SAMU Sociale* - the support

need to restructure the economy and to make public services accessible, the latter considered individual capacities and how they impacted on employability. Where capacities are seen lacking, this does not necessitate a response of solidarity, but the appeal to activity and a push.

organisation for homeless people – as its funding had increasingly dried up and his work had become increasingly unsustainable (Libération 2011).

Chapter 4: *Bürgergesellschaft*

Introduction

Notions of social disintegration, we have suggested, provide for a repertory of themes and images that can be put to use for a variety of purposes. These images work, are invoked and mapped onto empirical processes to provide explanations of crises. Such projections correspond to understandings that are particular to political, cultural and historical contexts. One such context was characterized by discontent over democratic-pluralist settlements and allowed in particular far-right groups to appeal to anxiety over the complexity of modern social relations.

In Germany, this anxiety was appealed to in relation to the alleged fragmentation of the body politic, characterised as a romantically idealized community of history, culture and blood. Social and political fragmentation, *Zersplitterung,* was one of the rhetorical hallmarks of anti-democratic movements of the 1920s. The concept was directed, for example, against modernism in the arts and against the parliamentary institutions of the Weimar Republic. It resonated strongly in the works of *Konservative Revolution* philosophers, such as in Oswald Spengler's (1934) and Carl Schmitt's (1979) writings. Social disintegration, in a tradition that proved to be in tune with the rising Nazi party, was to be averted by introducing strong principles of social stratification and in a cult of political leadership. *Volksgemeinschaft,* the ultimate vision of historical, cultural and biological unity, provided this horizon (Stolleis 1972).

In contemporary Germany, this anti-pluralist deployment of fragmentation has lost most of its impetus. It has been largely absent from acceptable intellectual exchange in the Federal Republic. The Weimar Republic was open to be attacked by movements from both sides of the political spectrum that could draw on alternative social utopias, which were fundamentally at odds with the realities of the republic. These contrasts, however, have largely been absent in post-war Germany, where the social utopias that remained in circulation turned out to be unsuccessful in mobilizing political movements.[64]

64 This may not merely be a result of an anti-totalitarian consensus, but also of how power was dispersed and diverse interests calibrated and institutionally represented in the Federal Republic's corporatist model (Czada 1994).

The critical standards that are used to judge the social realities of the Federal Republic lie most frequently not outside, but rather within the foundational traditions and myths of German post-war democracy. While racialized notions of belonging and homogeneous nationhood persist (Mandel 2008), *Zersplitterung* and *Volksgemeinschaft* have become strikingly nonsensical ideas outside of marginalized positions on the far right. The *Wirtschaftswunder* (economic miracle) of the 1950s, the 1954 World Cup victory, the experience of crises such as of the *Rote Armee Fraktion's* campaign in 1977, reunification and the democratic opposition in the East, as well as the collective response to the flooding of the River *Oder* in 1997, provide for idealized moments in the collective memory that can be deployed to point to contemporary shortcomings. But these ideals are located within democratic post-war history. Regarding the social realities of the Federal Republic, experiences of crisis and the spirit of solidarity that is perceived in their resolution are most frequently drawn to illustrate and define collective aspirations.

Where there is an experience of decline and disintegration, the projections that underpin such diagnoses are most frequently located within idealized accounts of recent German history. Among these, a type of economic nationalism and the *Wirtschaftswunder* as the foundational myth of post-war nation building, with the D-Mark as the corresponding "object of libido" (Habermas 1991, 84), provide for such contrasts. The reference to idealized accounts, as well as to high points of German post-war history, is frequently made in political debate in a way that provides for gripping and evocative contrasts with contemporary realities.

In contemporary political debate, however, ideas of social or political disintegration and moral decline continue to be articulated and to be met with considerable interest. The existential anxiety over *Zersplitterung* has been replaced by less radical references to defects in the moral consensus of contemporary Germany. Ulrich Wickert's (1994) book *Der Ehrliche ist der Dumme. Über den Verlust der Werte* (The Honest one is the fool. On the loss of values) was exceedingly well received. More recently, accounts that point to the decline of discipline amongst young people have been received with equal interest (Bueb 2006). Thilo Sarrazin's (2010) *Deutschland schafft sich ab* is yet another example for how controversial diagnoses of catastrophic national decline can achieve significant commercial success (Garton Ash 2011).

Diverse stories and images can be drawn on to craft the according narratives. The principles that account for the relative civility and conditions underpinning prosperity and economic development, for example, have been considered to be at risk (Kahn and Redepenning 1982). Globalization, as much a buzzword as it is in France or Britain, is seen to challenge the German social model (Altvater and Mahnkopf 1997). The fracturing of a moral consensus, as it is allegedly evidenced by various forms of 'outrageous' behaviour, is a theme of consistent popularity. In the course of recent revelations about widespread tax evasion among members of the German business elite, Finance Minister Peer Steinbrück (2009) remarked that the according offences posed a threat to the *Zusammenhalt der Gesellschaft*.[65] His successor, Wolfgang Schäuble recently consistently expresses similar concerns (BMI 2008; Schäuble 2009). Just as the 'outrageous' behaviour of tax-dodgers and bankers, violent crime, in particular by adolescents, is equally open to be seen and explained in the light of the declining force of a moral consensus. An incident in the Munich underground system that led to the death of man who had tried to intervene in an altercation served as the foil for editorial exchanges on the decline of social cohesion and civilizational standards (Knipping 2008). The incident became the focus of the 2008 election in the Land of Hesse where the conservative government, led by Roland Koch, sought to mobilize voters in a regional election by drawing on themes of social disintegration, moral decline and crime, in particular when it was committed by young Germans of immigrant background (Die Welt 2008). This recent campaign illustrates the continued salience of the political rhetoric of social disintegration, in particular of allegations about the loosening of moral bonds and the widespread experience of incivility in the public sphere.

Such notions of breakdown and decline are addressed in conceptualizations of positive visions of society that are introduced as a counterpoint. One of the more sustained attempts to develop a positive political agenda in response to various shortcomings drew on the idea of Bürgergesellschaft. A prominent actor in the definition of this idea, Wolfgang Thierse (2002), pointed out that "the relationship between individuals, state and society has become unclear, requires revision" in light of the experience of "dissolution, breakdown of social ties, new social polarization" (ibid).

65 *Gesellschaftlicher Zusammenhalt* is arguably the closest approximation to the English understanding of social cohesion.

Bürgergesellschaft, Thierse suggested, responds to this need for revision. It is frequently employed synonymously with *Zivilgesellschaft* (civil society) and has been brought to bear on a variety of phenomena. It experienced the height of its political prominence in the late 1990s and early 2000s when it emerged as a frame of reference for public debate and in discussions about social policy reform. The concept invoked the positive role of civil society movements in the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe. Over the 1990s, it was gradually redefined beyond concerns with democracy and towards a more general emphasis on social reform. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Bürgergesellschaft was specified and variously adapted as a template for the remodelling of German society (Klein 2001).

The reformist ideas pursued with Bürgergesellschaft are characterized by some diversity. The concept was used to point towards the need to foster practices of active citizenship. It was prominently developed to support claims for an enhanced role of foundations and third sector organisations. It informed the debate about the reform of welfare provision and the German social insurance models (Opielka, 2002, Lessenich, 2008). These definitions, moreover, coincided with a significant re-orientation of Gerhard Schröder's Social Democrats (SPD) towards the welfare state (Schröder 2003). The need to question traditional ways of service provision and to adopt the idea of an "enabling" or "activating" welfare state appeared prominently in programmatic statements on Bürgergesellschaft (Schröder, 2000, Deutscher Bundestag, 2002). In this context, the idea was seen to provide a corrective to the perceived sclerosis of the German social model. The invocation of risk and insecurity, the impotence of the welfare state, and political disaffiliation (*Politikverdrossenheit*) were seen as adding up to threatening scenarios. Bürgergesellschaft responded to this, and invoked a new sense of direction. As an imaginary horizon, it has channelled public policy making towards an increasing reliance on civic activation and individual responsibility. Its attractiveness, Helmut Dubiel (1994, 67) suggests, is not least a result of its "intuitive fit" and "the way it wraps confusing problem configurations into a condensed formula."

This chapter considers how Bürgergesellschaft became a concern and was defined in German political debate. It suggests that Bürgergesellschaft is underpinned by a social imaginary that conceives of society as in need of activation and that made activation appear as a compelling response to widely acknowledged problems. As was the case with *exclusion sociale*, this analytical concern is complicated by the lack of coherence

among different understandings of the concept. Bürgergesellschaft points to and channels a variety of ideals and corresponding anxieties. While it is frequently invoked to suggest the presence of a consolidated and unambiguous idea, we suggest in this chapter that usages and interpretations that circulated in the 1990s and early 2000s are characterized by considerable diversity.[66] Additionally, while Bürgergesellschaft is frequently used in order to define a general orientation towards social or political reform, it rarely provides a precise understanding regarding the measures and policies envisaged. Rather, a variety of ideals, concerns and political propositions are expressed with reference to the concept. This means that the unity of the concept, and how it is sustained despite such ambiguities, has to be of interest as well as the variety of voices within the German Bürgergesellschaft debate.

Despite the emphasis on discontinuity, this chapter suggests that various voices share a purpose for how they subscribe to and substantiate notions of individual responsibility and the need for heightened social activity. Undoubtedly, this idea of activity is ambiguous in its own right. In the case of Bürgergesellschaft, it entails notions of activity citizenship and political participation, of local self-help help, mutuality and subsidiary principles, as well as of a socio-economic self-reliance, which is presented as a departure from principles that were seen to have been enshrined in the German welfare state. Bürgergesellschaft appears to be a diverse container of problem descriptions and social visions that are minimally united by how they pay tribute to a particular socio-political tradition of German *Bürgerlichkeit* and for they use the resources of this tradition to propose turn towards civic and socio-economic activity.

First, the chapter investigates conceptual traditions of Bürgergesellschaft. It considers precedents of Bürgergesellschaft in the history of ideas, in the history of German *Bürgerlichkeit*, and in recent political history leading up to the fall of European communism. Secondly, it reviews the transition of the concept from obscurity to prominence in the course of the 1990s and, thirdly, identifies three different types of understanding that are characteristic of how it has been defined and deployed. Fourthly, the chapter investigates a synthesis of these types that informed political debate and was

66 Despite ambiguity, particular understandings of Bürgergesellschaft are often vigorously defended by their exponents (e.g., Gohl 1998).

used to substantiate ideas the idea of *Fordern und Fördern* ('demand and support'), which were prominently introduced as part of the *Hartz* reform agenda.[67]

Bürgergesellschaft: Origins and Influences

In the following we identify three main tendencies in the development of Bürgergesellschaft. Firstly, we consider how it is understood to reflect traditions of German bourgeois culture and life; secondly, its relations to civil society ideas in political thought; and, thirdly, its inspiration by civil society practice as it was seen to have been at work in the democratic transformations of Eastern Europe. This cannot be more than a highly selective survey of themes. It seeks to establish the main currents that characterize the definition and deployment of Bürgergesellschaft in the political discourse of the 1990s.

Dimensions of Bürgerlichkeit

A peculiarity of the German language is its unfamiliarity with the distinction between *citoyen* and *bourgeois* (Riedel 1971). *Bürger* – usually translated as citizen – can thus denote the politically active subject that partakes in a public sphere, as well as the bearer of certain cultural attributes of middle-classness, most often a subject that is conceived in apolitical terms. This conflation has complicated the usage of the term and the reference to the subject position, *Bürger,* and its attributes, *bürgerlich*. It has meant that terminological choices have been politically laden and subject to variegated appreciations that relate to concepts in different ways, positive or negative. It meant that for the Left, at least since Karl Marx, notions of *Bürgerlichkeit* became coextensive with a type of possessive individualism that was seen to be the super-structural expression of culture and morality of capitalist modes of production (see for example Marx 1974[1843]). Subsequent histories of German *Bürgerlichkeit* have often followed this critical perspective and offered neo-Marxist (Sombart 1913) or non-Marxist

67 The concept under investigation might as well have been *Zivilgesellschaft*. *Zivilgesellschaft* is frequently used synonymously with Bürgergesellschaft and lends itself more readily for translation into 'civil society'. Bürgergesellschaft, by contrasts, points more immediately to terminological peculiarities of the German language and to a specific cultural and historical background. While the discourse of Bürgergesellschaft draws on the civil society tradition in the history of political ideas, it equally partakes in the socio-cultural legacy of German *Bürgerlichkeit*, bourgeois culture, politics and life. The way society Bürgergesellschaft was deployed in recent political debate is not sufficiently understood by considering it as a mere instantiation of civil society ideas (e.g., Cohen and Arato 1992). It reflects the commemoration of a specifically German socio-cultural model, too. For a valuable overview of the development of *Zivilgesellschaft* in political theory and German political discourse (though with less emphasis on the polyvalence of the concept), see Klein (2001).

(Friedrich Nietzsche, Carl Schmitt) rejections of the value horizon of *bürgerliches Leben* (bourgeois life). 20th century historians, social theorists and politicians – often in contradistinction to the leftist rejection – have been concerned to salvage what they considered to be the potentials of *Bürgerlichkeit* and to reconstruct the idea for the purposes of a positive political project (Conze 2004). While in more recent decades the conflict over this meaning seems to have lost some of its urgency, the adjective *bürgerlich* continues to have a certain derogatory ring.[68] Hence, while the concept of Bürgergesellschaft has been embraced by exponents of the German left, notably where they are interested in increasing the scope of democratic participation, it partakes in a tradition of contested political meaning.

The *social form* of Bürgergesellschaft, too, is difficult to define for its historical significations and for how this is seen to correspond to contemporary formations of social life. Commentators point to the local self-organisation of German *Bürger*, conceived as either civic-minded or inwardly-oriented towards private life or commercial production and exchange. *Bürgergesellschaften*, in the plural, are seen to have emerged in the 18th and 19th century when they were institutionally tied to local chambers of commerce, guilds and associations of local craftsmen. These associations formed circles of respectable civic and commercial interest notably in small-scale urban settings (Jessen, Reichardt and Klein 2004). This origin of the notion is most clearly preserved in specifically South German contributions to the definition of the Bürgergesellschaft concept in the 1990s and 2000s (Ueltzhöffer and Ascheberg 1996). These perspectives point to potentials for local self help and mutuality that can be traced to historical formations of bourgeois life (Gall and Langewiesche 1995).[69] An additional localist undercurrent of the concept is due to its place in the history of industrialization where *Bürgergesellschaften* frequently stood in opposition to the interests of the emerging classes of industrial entrepreneurs (Gall 1975). Moreover, the concept needs to be distinguished from the 19th century self-organisation of the workers movement in

68 Oskar Lafontaine (1982), former Social Democrat and later leader of *Die Linke* (Left Party), famously referred to bourgeois *Sekundärtugenden* (secondary virtues) such as cleanliness, duty or discipline as the kinds of values needed to run a concentration camp.

69 Historically, such potentials were not necessarily considered to be generalizable as a template for national reform. They refer to local social formations that preceded the Prussian unification of Germany in the second half of the 19th century and that were even considered to be impediments to objectives towards modernisation. Moreover, in particular the defeat of the democratic revolution in 1848 meant that the *political* content of bourgeois associational life remained largely dormant (Lipp and Kaschuba 1984).

Arbeitervereinen (Mommsen 1978; Schmidt 2004). Altogether, the empirical reality of *Bürgergesellschaften* in 19th century Germany appears to offer some elements of a template for the construction of local circles of self-help. This template hardly presents itself, at least not in a straightforward way, as a model to recast the social relations of advanced capitalist societies. Its introduction in German public discourse in the 1990s required additional specifications and a new impetus that is not necessarily well understood as the continuation of historical practices or concerns.

In this regard, the German social historian Ulrich Wehler draws some useful distinctions between different modes of bourgeois life. *Bürgergesellschaft*, Wehler (2001, 620) points out, refers to "the concrete and empirically specifiable ensembles of *bourgeois* classes defined by possession, commerce and employment". In German social history, he suggests, these classes always constituted a minority. These concrete social formations, in turn, can be contrasted with *Bürgerlichkeit*, which refers to cultural attributes of bourgeois life and the according conventions, norms and expectations. *Bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, moreover, indicates neither a discernible social configuration nor a set of available attitudes, but an aspiration towards the generalization of bourgeois conduct and politics. Following Wehler's suggestion, it should be the latter, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, that offers itself most readily as a political project towards generalized civility and towards the extension of liberty and prosperity.

A second social historian of considerable reputation, Werner Conze (2004), slightly departs from Wehler's distinctions, in particular on the meaning of *Bürgerlichkeit*. While the fragmentation of culturally bourgeois milieus in German social history and the dislocating effects of wars and dictatorships on forms of social life have meant that concrete cultural repertories of 19th century attitudes were unavailable, *Bürgerlichkeit* retains a twofold significance. It can refer to the generalization of a form of bourgeois life that denotes economic activity, is regarded to be socially integrative and grounded on a commitment to liberal values (2004, 527); or it can refer to the civic generalization of *Bürgerlichkeit* as "citizenship and, further, as civility for the purpose of socio-political and socio-cultural liberalization" (2004, 528). Conze argues that both understandings have been at hand in the history of the Federal Republic. *Bürgerlichkeit*, as an ideal of generalized bourgeois attitudes, can function as a template for social integration, economic success and political liberty. This model, however, has not been static and does not draw in a clear-cut fashion on the attitudinal repertories and ways of

life seen to be characteristic of 19th century bourgeoisie. Both Wehler and Conze, while arguing for potentials of *Bürgerlichkeit* to be rehabilitated in order to sustain liberal politics and an ethos of civic engagement, point to the need for interpretation in how such potentials are open to be mobilized, not just as a straightforward continuation of historical precedents, but as part of contemporary political efforts.

Their distinctions, though not usually reflected in how the relevant notions are used in political rhetoric, point to certain paradoxes. The concept of Bürgergesellschaft that is of concern in this chapter indicates a vision of social organization, backed up by an appeal to historical precedents, which has been adopted in proposals towards social reform, notably that of the welfare state. A significant part of this reformist appeal towards Bürgergesellschaft is concerned with how attitudes of self-reliance, activity and responsibility can be generalized. This proposition, however, carries the name of a social formation that has been lost and is clearly– maybe with the exception of South German conservatives that we consider below – not characteristic of what most contemporary exponents of the idea of Bürgergesellschaft seek to revitalise.

Historical precedents and the subtleties of conceptual distinctions have neither primarily motivated the adoption of the term, nor influenced and predisposed its use in contemporary political debate. Rather, current interest seems to result from the way the concept can be brought to bear on a number of perceived challenges, not least – as yet another eminent historian of the German bourgeoisie puts it – regarding the "experience that the state can become overextended in its position as an interventionist social welfare state" (Kocka 2004, 72). This, in turn, should not obscure that the struggle over the meaning of *Bürgerlichkeit* is politically significant, for example when mainstream parties attempt to appeal to centre-ground voters (such as when the concept of 'Neue Mitte' (new middle) was introduced, see Blair and Schröder 2003[1999]).

Civil Society Traditions

Similar to ambiguities in German *Bürgerlichkeit*, the idea of civil society looks back on a protracted history of conceptual advances with Aristotle's *koinonia politike* or Cicero's *societas civiliis* conventionally seen at its origins (Cohen and Arato 1992). The appearance of continuity, however, may deceive. Aristotle's civil society marks a sphere in which high politics is not yet separated from other types of civic activity. Similarly, the further conceptual development in political theory is frequently at odds with more

contemporary understandings of civil society as an intermediary sphere between the economy and the state. For Adam Smith and John Locke, civil society is not least positively distinguished by commercial activity, while Adam Ferguson (1980) maintains this connection but points to the corrupting consequences of gain-seeking and luxury. Hegel conceives of civil society, indebted to Scottish Enlightenment thinking, as an intermediate step from privatized individualism towards the realization of morally purposeful life in the state (Hegel 1942[1842]: § 182 ff.; Waszek 1988). In the Marxist tradition, as suggested previously, *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* is the cultural configuration that reflects capitalist modes of production and is seen to be characterized by the valorisation of individualism and profiteering. This negative connotation of *bürgerliche Gesellschaft* has been carried forward and, we have suggested, still blemishes the German term. Only the differently charged Anglo-American notion of *civil society*, germanised as *Zivilgesellschaft*, appeared as an opening to redeem an equivalent, in Bürgergesellschaft (rather than in Marx's *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*).

It seems then that there is no unitary civil society tradition that could draw on more than a very limited degree of continuity between Greek, Roman, Christian and early modern thinking and link these to contemporary theorizations and uses in political discourse. The central concern of modern civil society ideas, the attempt to delineate activities and forms of collective life in between the state and the privacy of individual citizens, does not clearly correspond to previous uses of the concept, such as in antiquity. Neither is the definition of civil society as a social sphere of civic interaction, distinct from the economic sphere, a common feature of a theoretical tradition.

In relation to the former, the distinction between spheres of political interaction, Charles Taylor suggests that it is the differentiation between society and its political organization, as expressed in the distinction between Church and state in Medieval political thought, that provided the origins of a politically autonomous conception of civil society (Taylor 1990). While civil society today often speaks to an "anti-corporatist aspiration" (Taylor 1995, 207), there have been a variety of ways in which civil society has been related, distinguished or separated from the state. For Hobbes (1994), for example, *status civilis* emerges from the consensus that empowers the Leviathan: it is functionally tied to the state. Only the beginning of political liberalism, Taylor (1990, 51) suggests, provided civil society with the meaning that still resonates today – as an "extra-political reality" and as a sphere of legitimacy and collective action

in opposition to state power. While modern conceptions of civil society are frequently seen to be in opposition to the state, this oppositionality has not been shared historically.

Taylor (1995) usefully distinguishes between what he considers the *L*- and the *M-stream* of civil society. The former, as characterised by the work of John Locke, posits the separation of society and state. It subscribes to "the idea that society has its own prepolitical life and unity which the political structure must serve. Society has the right and power to make and unmake political authority" (Taylor 1995, 219). This idea has been powerful in the development of conceptions of popular sovereignty, where claims towards self-determination and democracy were inferred from rights invested in a social sphere whose authority was seen to trump those of monarchs, for example. Equally, it has been the underlying vision of recent revival of civil society ideas since the 1980s, maybe best characterised in György Konrád's (1984) *Antipolitics*.

By contrast, the *M-stream* - as characterized by Montesquieu's writings – assumes an interlocking and mutual dependence of state and society. "Society is not defined independently of its political constitution. On the contrary, the free society is identified with a certain such constitution" (Taylor 1995, 214). As with the L-stream, such ideas can take different shapes and have been proposed in support of divergent political projects. Society is not extra- or apolitical; rather, both state and society are constitutive parts of what collectively makes for a balanced and well-governed body politic. Such ideas have been part of various ideas that infer functional benefits of a vibrant, associational society for collective life, including the functioning of political institutions. Alexis de Tocqueville (1970) and recent social capital theorists, such as Robert Putnam (2000), fall in this category.

Regarding the second moment of rupture in the tradition – the relationship between civil and economic sphere – it is striking that ideas that are most familiar today have only recently been purged of their economic constituents. Traditionally, commerce and commodity exchange were seen as significant attributes of civil society activity. De Mandeville (1740) famously highlighted the civilizing and rationalizing force of capitalist exchange. For Hegel, civil society is the sphere of "private persons whose end is their own interest" (Hegel 1942[1842], § 187). Marx's *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, as we have seen, was primarily defined in economic terms, with its modes of political interaction a mere reflection of economic determinants. Clearly, these perspectives on

civil society stand in contrast to what has recently become a much more familiar picture. Here, distinctions are drawn, on the one hand, between logics of action that characterise civil society, and, on the other hand, the self-interest or market rationality that pervades the economic sphere (Seligman 1993). In public sphere-models of civil society this opposition between fundamentally opposing logics is reinforced and highlights an opposition of fundamentally opposing logics (Habermas 1962). These contemporary understandings may point towards certain ideals but can hardly be considered to be an invariable feature a unitary civil society tradition.

Civil society has thus been re-interpreted in line with political exigencies and in response to intellectual currents. In the way it is available today, multiple layers of meaning are preserved and facilitate the deployment of civil society ideas. In fact, the resurgence of civil society since the 1980s, Krishan Kumar (1993, 375-6) suggests, does not evidence the power of unbroken traditions, but rather appears as "a self-conscious exercise in remembering and retrieval". This retrieval is in equal measure about the identification of positive reservoirs as it is about contention and critique. Civil society has been cast in opposition to a range of foes, against an overbearing state, but equally against out-of-control market forces; against civic apathy and as a remedy to political disaffiliation, but equally against intrusive political projects, republicanism and an overemphasis on civic virtues (see Seligman 1995).[70]

Civil society encapsulates a number of perspectives on and a variety of normative visions of society. Depending on what currents are activated, different normative visions can be invoked. The politics that is proposed with an emphasis on the co-dependence between state and society may differ significantly from what propositions that emphasize a more or less radical separation of spheres.

Civil Society and the Democratic Movements in the East

A political vision of civil society became the rallying cry of democratic and anti-dictatorial politics in the 1980s. Not only did the notion gain some significance for activists within democratic movements, but it became the analytical focus for the study

70 Ideological projects and political programmes are thus difficult to separate from the various elaborations of civil society in political theory. Civil society is a notion with strong emotional undercurrents, as exemplified by the more recent wave of civil society enthusiasm or by the long-standing negative appeal of the German *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*. Analytical, sentimental and normative concerns appear to be intertwined.

of a wide range of variegated processes and transitions in Eastern Europe and Latin America. Civil society was seen to be the primary driver of the so-called "third wave" of democratic transitions (Huntington 1991).

In particular the Polish Solidarity movement has been considered as an influential example for the potentials of civil society and how these may challenge sclerotic and authoritarian state institutions. Solidarity conceived of civil society not primarily in order to arrive at new forms of state-society relationships, but rather to achieve a de-coupling of the two and to carve out spheres outside of state control (Kumar 1993, 386). Leszek Kolakowski (1978) emphasized this impetus, pointed towards the significance of circles of friends and the family as places where 'dignity' and 'truth' reside, and which needed to be the starting point for social renewal (see Arato 1981). Similarly, Vaclav Havel highlighted the "independent spiritual, social and political life of society" (Vaclav Havel [1978] in Hall and Trentmann 2005, 200). In this sphere, "living within the truth" (ibid.) is a possibility that remains foreclosed in the wider political and social system. György Konrád's *Antipolitics* – with antipolitics as the "ethos of civil society" (1984) – put similar emphasis on extra-political spheres. Following this logic, building civil society means the construction of alternative public spheres with their own channels of information and alternative value systems. Under the conditions of communism such spheres would, if not contribute to the destabilisation of the regime, at least allow for a modicum of personal and private dignity. Dubiel (1994, 76) captures the impetus of such movements which, in line with Taylor's *L-model*, are "not about the dissolution of the state into society but about the institutionalisation of difference between state and society". While the broader historical context and different conceptions of civil society ideas in the transformations in Eastern Europe are beyond our scope (see however Thaa 1996; Glaser 2005), it is clear that a prominent understanding within these movements was close to Taylor's *L-stream* of mutual autonomy. Even where the aim was not the radical separation of state and society, the assumption often seemed to be that civil society could be the sphere where persons can experience a sense of integrity and self-worth – experiences that state intervention would disrupt.

As with the historical forms of German *Bürgerlichkeit* or with the precedents of civil society in political theory, the relevance of ideas of civil society in the democratisation of Eastern Europe does not immediately present itself for application in different

contexts. The oppositional force of civil society, fundamentally at odds with the state and its institutions, required an adaptation where it was to be applied in order to achieve not the dissolution of the state or the creation of separate spheres of undistorted social life, but the realisation of certain social goods that liberal democracies are seen to require.

From East to West

The reception of civil society ideas in Germany in the 1990s was inspired by the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe and, of course, in East Germany in particular. A certain enthusiasm about civil society as a panacea for various problems became evident, and the concept was adopted, it has been suggested, as shorthand for "all that is desired in the making of a democratic society" (Kumar 1993, 388). Once the spirit of civil society had been instilled, the suggestion seemed to be, it would break up authoritarian structures and set in motion a transition not just towards democracy but more generally towards a better society.

There is one evident discontinuity in the westward journey of civil society ideas. In democratic transitions in Eastern Europe, the ideal had contained a vision of decoupled or independent spheres of social life. In the way these transitions were perceived from the West, it was the oppositional and unsettling qualities of civil society activity and notably its subversion of regime structures that were emphasized. With regard to possible applications of these ideas in the west, such properties needed to be qualified, the oppositionality directed away from the state in order to be targeted not at the 'system', but at specific social conditions that were considered undesirable.

Moreover, new purposes emerged that were not present in how civil society had been conceived in Poland and other places, such as the relevance of civil society activity for social integration. The way the concept was seen to provide for production of social glue, however, is usually closed linked to a discussion about the role of the state. Rather than with the autonomy of social self-organisation, it was now concerned with the "economic, socio-structural and cultural preconditions of political systems of the western type" (Thaa 1996, 159-60) and, notably, employed in political debates, such as on the welfare state in the 1980s and 90s (von Beyme 2000, 42). The idea of decoupling between state and society thus seemed to be replaced by an understanding of civil society as a corrective and supplement to state activity. In recent debates, nonetheless,

oppositional impulses, as well as a good measure of anti-state resentment, remain. Significantly, it not just its conceptual nuances that determine the way the idea of civil society can be used in current political debate. As Chris Hann (1995, 159, emphasis in original) suggests, since the early 1990s civil society was "no longer the preserve of an elite of political philosophers and historians. It was regularly used to add a certain *gravitas* to the prose of politicians and journalists in a bewildering variety of circumstances." Accordingly, Alvin Gouldner's account of 1980 misses something of the more multifaceted contemporary usage. Civil society, Gouldner (1980, 370) suggested, is about

> seeking an alternative, third way, to the atomization of a competitive market society, on the one side, and to a state dominated existence, on the other. Sociology conceives of civil society as a haven and support for individual persons, i.e., as de-atomizing; as a medium through which they can pursue their own projects in the course of their everyday lives; and as ways of avoiding dependence on the domination by the state.

While the in-between quality of civil society remains, its functional benefits are no longer confined to the production of spheres of autonomy, as was predominantly the case in the East. Civil society is increasingly drawn on to point to the co-production of collective goods, a vibrant political sphere, social integration, a well-functioning market economy, the thriving of democratic institutions and a system of self-help and cooperation that supplements centralized welfare provision. Belonging to the state and belonging to civil society, contrary to what Gouldner would seem to argue, are generally not considered opposites. In fact, as Michael Walzer (1999, 63) has argued "the members of civil society must do what the citizens of the state can't do – even though these are the same people". The more recent purpose of civil society discourse is not least concerned with the definition of civic attitudes, activities and forms of responsible conduct.

The relative prominence of the *M-stream* in civil society thinking, however, does not mean that earlier horizons of meaning have been lost, or that the revolutionary emotionalism that was part of how civil society activity was conceived of in the context of democratization has been completely abandoned. Civil society ideas, notably in their *Bürgergesellschaft* version, have been attached to an agenda of socio-economic reform that is strongly interested in the scaling back the welfare state. In this form, the older, separatist horizon remains retrievable, such as when civil society is introduced as a

substitute to state activity. Oppositionality towards the state is one of the strategic resources that a civil society rhetoric supplies. In the following we explore how such argumentative resources – as well as the particularities of the cultural tradition of *Bürgerlichkeit* – played a role in German political debate.

Bürgergesellschaft and political debate

The following sections consider the role of Bürgergesellschaft in German social reform debates. The concept is traced within pertinent discourses, speeches and political campaigns. We have established some of the influences that had played a role in such debates: civil society ideas, the international appeal that such ideas developed in the understanding of democratic transformations in the East, and notions of German *Bürgerlichkeit*. Despite this variety of influences, the following suggests that the introduction of Bürgergesellschaft in German reform discourse shows a certain degree of uniformity for how it has changed the contours of public debate on social issues. The introduction of the concept coincided with, and to some extent paved the way for, a turn to notions of individual responsibility and social activation.

While occasional references to Bürgergesellschaft preceded the 1990s, it was only in the beginning of the 90s that the concept was regularly invoked with the social conditions of the Federal Republic in mind. The practical role of Bürgergesellschaft in German social reform debates can be traced back to the contribution of a few prominent policy entrepreneurs, public intellectuals and commentators. Warnfried Dettling (1993; 1995; 1998; 2001) used the term in his criticism of the interventionist welfare state and in order to delineate alternative visions of social solidarity. Hildegard Hamm-Brücher (1992; 1993; 2000; 2003) employed the concept in her criticism of party politics and of how state institutions failed to allow for the direct democratic input of citizens. Alois Glück (2007) and others drew on the term to express ideas about active citizenship, social capital and to put emphasis on structures of local self-help and associational life. Only a fraction of its invocations provide a thorough theoretical underpinning or a sustained discussion of meaning and significance of the concept, and the following is primarily interested in conscious efforts of application and definition. These deployments of Bürgergesellschaft occurred against the backdrop of a particular understanding of social crisis that widely circulated in German political debate of the 1990s.

The crisis of the German social model

Helmut Dubiel (1994, 67) notes how the intuitive fit of civil society ideas is telling, not so much for how these respond to practical social challenges, but inasmuch as the notion condenses complex problem configurations into a compact formula. Indeed, the efficacy of Bürgergesellschaft can be understood against the background of such configurations that are diffuse, unspecific and difficult to disentangle with much precision. Any specific bundling of problems might draw on a number of widely accepted but previously unrelated challenges. Similar to 'vehicular ideas' that we have considered in Chapter 1, problem bundles may provide a convincing account as to why individual problems interrelate and pose an overarching challenge. For problems to 'bundle', it needs to be illustrated why they do not merely account for individual challenges but culminate in a broader national one. The perception in France that the *trente glorieuses* had come to an end, as we have considered in the previous chapter, accounts for similar understanding of cumulative problems that may amount to the perception of a social crisis.

In the early 1990s, a variety of problems presented themselves to be connected accordingly. German unification had turned out to be significantly more challenging than had been promised in its run-up. As the industrial sector in the East ceased to exist, with jobs virtually disappearing over night, the promise of effortless prosperity (*blühende Landschaften*) was quickly shown to be hollow (Müller 2006). This sense of crisis in the East was compounded by an increasing uncertainty about the viability of the West German model to cope with the conditions of reunification, globalization and international economic competition. The sclerosis of the *Standort Deutschland* ('Germany plc') became a recurrent theme in the economic and political debates of the day. The idea of a *Reformstau* (backlog of reforms) connected to what social scientists had previously established as the *Unregierbarkeit* ('ungovernability') of the federal system and its corporatist social model (see Offe 1980).

As German post-war identification had drawn significantly on a sense of economic superiority, the saliency of economic motifs in this debate, and their weight as significant markers of German sensibilities, should not be underestimated (see for example Habermas 1990; 1991). The understanding that the country was falling behind,

and that the post-war settlement proved inadequate for catching up, became a recurrent and powerfully as well as prominently articulated theme in political debate.

Roman Herzog, Germany's Federal President 1994-1999, channelled this sentiment in his so-called *Ruck* speech on 26 April 1997.[71] "A sense of paralysis has gripped our society", Herzog (1997) observed. "Germany faces the threat of falling behind," he suggested and pointed to entrenched and inflexible interests that made it difficult to "keep up". However, it was not merely the entrenched interests and inflexibility of powerful social actors, trade unions for example, that he identified as at the core of the German dilemma. The attitudes of a population that had lost its drive and spirit needed to be reconstructed. Accordingly, "paralysis" was central to Herzog's diagnosis of the problem: the inflexibility and irresponsibility of the social collective made it difficult for Germany to compete with the dynamic economies of Asia and of the Anglo-American world. He suggested that this collective sclerosis had to be understood as a manifestation of individual inflexibility and irresponsibility. The target audience of Herzog's address was the German social collective as well as individual citizens. In fact, he suggested that the way persons related to the social collective was at the core of the problem: "Should it not be our goal to strive for a society of solidarity – not in the sense of maximized social transfer, but based on the trust put into the responsible conduct of every single person for him- or herself and for the community?" (Herzog 1997). Traditional models of social transfer, in fact, had begun to coincide with a "dangerous loss of a sense of community (*Gemeinsinn*)." A "new social contract" needed to be put in place, and, Herzog suggested, "vested rights and possessions need to be up for grabs. Everybody needs to move."

Stephan Lessenich (2006a, 336) offers an analysis of Herzog's intervention.

> The institutionalized incentives of the German social model … have shaped psychic structures and attitudinal disposition in such a passivating way that only a broadly targeted and deep-reaching change of mentality directed at social activation can pull the German cart out of a morass of deficient economic competitiveness, unpreparedness for political reform and excessive levels of demands.

71 The most memorable line of the speech was *Durch Deutschland muss ein Ruck gehen* (Germany needs to pull itself together). *Ruck* refers to the act of pulling together, or, alternatively, to a leap or sudden movement.

This change of mentality could only be achieved, according to Herzog, where social relations were redefined. The way the welfare state mediated the relationship between individuals and society, he suggested, had led to passivity. A revision of this pathological relationship would roll back the distorting impact of the state and, drawing on the rediscovery of individual responsibility, lead to an increased social dynamism to address significant problems – notably Germany's comparative loss of economic standing. In contrast to interventions in the United Kingdom, where – as we will see later – community cohesion would only implicitly be grounded on a new social imaginary, in Herzog's case the reinvention of the social was introduced as an open and conscious effort. In fact, the construction of a new social imaginary was the essence of Herzog's political intervention, which was concerned with the remodelling of society, and with the creation of subjectivities and character dispositions that were suitable to the society thus remodelled.

Herzog's speech was exceedingly well received and resonated in political debate for a considerable amount of time. The reference to a social sclerosis corresponded to widespread problem descriptions. The appeal to individual responsibility coincided with a strongly articulated scepticism about the viability of the welfare state and its alleged shortcomings, seen to epitomize the paralysis of society as a whole. Moreover, the intervention was woven into an emotional call-to-arms that introduced individual flexibility and the required posture of activity as the fulfilment of a patriotic duty. Such types of appeal that would tie the duty to responsibility and individual activity to the well-being of the nation proved to be influential for subsequent interventions in reform debates. In two public campaigns, funded by employer's associations, that explicitly worked with rhetorical elements of Herzog's speech – *Du bist Deutschland* ('You are Germany') and *Deutschland packt's an* ('Germany tackles it') – the according themes were put to use. Herzog's prescription of individual activation – "everybody needs to move" – was in tune with the *zeitgeist* and available to be translated for the purpose of the social reform debates of the late 1990s and early 2000s. Herzog's problem account was conspicuously connected to contributions in these debates that called for a revision of the welfare state and, in particular, for a retreat from previous levels of service provision. His speech established problems, articulated solutions and wrapped both in an attractive language of both collective and individual responsibility.

Although not all of its different exponents subscribed to the core ideas of Herzog's speech, the idea of Bürgergesellschaft was connected to some of such ideas, in particular to the significance of 'activity' and 'activation' as an antidote to significant social problems. Definitions of the Bürgergesellschaft concept incorporated themes that preceded Herzog's intervention, such as of civic disaffiliation (*Politikverdrossenheit*) and of the need to establish channels for civic participation in an otherwise unresponsive political system. The interest in Bürgergesellschaft and democracy, its relationship with socio-economic questions and welfare reform, and a conservative-localist understanding that used the potentials *Bürgerlichkeit* are our concern in the following.

Bürgergesellschaft and the welfare state

The idea that shortcomings of the German socio-economic model could be attributed to flaws in its welfare state arrangements became one of the guiding themes in the reform debates of the late 1990s and early 2000s. The intention of a variety of contributions, and an idea that was propagated in a number of well-funded campaigns, was to outline an alternative social model to address such shortcomings. Bürgergesellschaft, in these interventions, was considered shorthand for such alternatives and was directed at repertories of responsibility that needed to be mobilized as an antidote to German sclerosis.

In 1999, Rolf-E. Breuer, chief executive officer of *Deutsche Bank*, spelt out this idea in an editorial for the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. "While the world economy integrates, society is drifting apart", Breuer (1999, 9) diagnosed. Pressures of globalization had limited the ability of the nation state to act and maintain national models of social transfer that could safeguard social cohesion. Bürgergesellschaft, in Breuer's account, points to alternative resources. For him, it provided a horizon for the reinvention of society in order to be able to successfully cope with international pressures and with their repercussions for national solidarity.

Among the problems Breuer identifies is the rigidity of the German labour market, economic protectionism, the sclerosis of state bureaucracies and of the corporatist model. An alternative would need to draw on a renewed appreciation of the independence of the civic sphere, predominantly defined in terms of free

entrepreneurship. Bürgergesellschaft, Breuer argued, offered itself as an alternative to the overweening state. He asked

> what about social policy? Whoever intends to adjust it to the tradition of Bürgergesellschaft, while also responding to the requirements of the global economy, needs to be primarily concerned with strengthening individual responsibility for oneself and for society [...]. In the globalized economy, there is a place for the state and its institutions, but it's no longer the same. If it wants to safeguard the modernity of institutions and norms while simultaneously guaranteeing and maintaining social cohesion, it needs to be a true *Bürgerstaat*. (Breuer 1999, 9)

This *Bürgerstaat* (*Bürger*-state), Breuer suggested, required a sense of responsibility: "lives need to be lived responsibly" (ibid.). Individual rights had to correlate with obligations: freedom of choice in relation to employment meant, according to his intervention, the responsibility to "constantly work on one's qualifications"; free access to information and the absence of censorship come with the obligation "to stay informed". The vision of Bürgergesellschaft, in Breuer's contribution, was not spelt out in great precision. It served as an alternative but vague framework of social solidarity absent from the welfare state, whose provisions would not hold in the face of international competition.

Outlining similar objectives, a well-funded public relations campaign was initiated in the early 2000s and deployed the idea of Bürgergesellschaft along similar lines. The *BürgerKonvent* was set up by Meinhard Miegel, a political scientist with close relations to the German Christian Democrats (CDU). Miegel (2002) had been a critic of welfare state arrangements for some time and had advanced a line of critique by accusing its regime of producing immature and other-directed subjects. The welfare state, it was argued in an positive review of book by Miegel (*The Deformed Society)*, "with its bizarre and implausible mechanisms of redistribution degrades individuals in a paternalistic manner to babbling children" (Deckstein 2002). In fact, "the welfare state of German coinage is rooted in a pre-democratic tradition and has long stood in the way of the development of Bürgergesellschaft" (Miegel quoted in Deckstein 2002). Invoking the *Wirtschaftswunder* and the post-war social settlement, Miegel (2002, 210) suggested that

> the natural cohesion *(natürlicher Zusammenhang*) between individuals which had been weakened through the socio-political interventions by the [Nazi] state, had to be revived, social connections had to be rebuilt. Fundamentally it was

> about nothing else than our contemporary controversy: *Bürgergesellschaft* or *Staatsgesellschaft*?"

Miegel also put emphasis on how the welfare state had led to severe psychological dislocations, "split personalities", where citizens were "grown-up men and women, and yet babbling children. One hundred years of the welfare state have led to split personalities" (2002, 229). Against this negative backdrop, Miegel defined the positive ideal of Bürgergesellschaft. Defenders of the old system of state-sponsored social solidarity, he suggested, had no grasp of its alternative potentials:

> The Bürgergesellschaft that is characterized by the idea that individuals and their surrounding communities carry as much responsibility as possible and thus grow and are empowered, is foreign [to their deformed conception of social solidarity]. As long as these forces rule, it will be difficult for Germany to develop into a confident, responsible and dynamic Bürgergesellschaft. (2002, 284-5)

This reformist project was introduced not just as a desirable political objective but in the terms of an existential struggle. If challenges remained unmet, Miegel pointed to the likelihood of revolutionary countermovement (ibid., 285), though it remained unclear whether these would be in favour of Bürgergesellschaft or some other ideal.

Positions by Breuer or Miegel could be rejected as idiosyncratic and particular, were they not profoundly in tune with the currents of public debate as outlined by Herzog and successfully appealed to in political mobilisations, such as by the *BürgerKonvent*. The *BürgerKonvent* used the third person standpoint of a collective 'we', thus claiming for itself the vantage point of a disaffected citizenry. It applied the language and symbolism of a social movement that would articulate widespread discontent on the part of the population (BürgerKonvent 2003). "We Germans are at an impasse. If we do not change our course we will collide with fundamentally changed realities" (BürgerKonvent 2003, 3). Those who were "willing to change face those who stick to vested rights and interests" (BürgerKonvent 2003, 4). Accordingly, a struggle (*Ringen*) was about to break out over the "structures of power that have arisen from a misguided welfare state" (BürgerKonvent 2003, 4). The aim, in turn, is "to create a free and active Bürgergesellschaft. The *BürgerKonvent* takes charge of this development, offers itself as a platform and calls on citizens to participate in the social-political future of this country" (BürgerKonvent no date). Against this background, a number of different

claims were articulated, among them freedom of choice in the welfare state or "competition from *Kindergarten* to university".

Such claims by the *BürgerKonvent*, proposed by using the language of an emotional appeal that Herzog had established, were presented in a series of television spots on private channels. The spots drew on the imagery of rescue efforts and the outpouring of expressions of solidarity in the aftermath of the flooding of the River Oder in 1997. They invoked a sense of national purpose by comparing the perceived national challenge with this particular example of collective self-help. Rudolf Speth (2003, 3) remarked that this strategy of the *BürgerKonvent* "skilfully connects the semantic-symbolic content of the debate on Bürgergesellschaft with a programme of radical social reform" (ibid.). The means for these representations were provided by the imagery of the "foundational myth of the Federal Republic, national symbols and communal sentiments" (ibid.).

The interventions of Breuer and the *BürgerKonvent* provide an illustration of how Bürgergesellschaft was invoked to substantiate socio-economic reform proposals. Such contributions were predominantly concerned with reducing the scale of the welfare state and with promoting alternative visions of solidarity to replace those embodied in the welfare state regime. The concrete nature and institutional underpinnings of this solidarity remained largely elusive, but strong emphasis was put on the self-organisation of an autonomous sphere of citizens, conceived as mobile, flexible, and active subjects. This understanding of Bürgergesellschaft is characterized, though not to its detriment in the political debate of the time, by a certain paradox: it either describes potentials for activity as always already or as not yet existing. It remains unclear whether the spirit of activity that underpins the new solidarity needs to be fostered or imposed.

Bürgergesellschaft and local self-help

Already in the interventions by Herzog and Breuer, a certain complaint about the moral decline of German society was evident. For Breuer (1999, 9), a "fragmentation of moral signposts" was part of the problem that puts the *Standort Deutschland* into question. Herzog pointed to the decline and to the rediscovery of duty as a virtue, and thus paid at least passing reference to solidly conservative positions. Moreover, in these understandings Bürgergesellschaft was considered to be at least partially synonymous with virtues of self-reliance and economic activity, and such virtues, it was suggested,

had a tradition in *Bürgerlichkeit*. The welfare state, with its alien and socialist influences, it was argued, had done its part to distort the foundations of such virtues.

However, there are additional ideational and cultural markers present in different conceptualizations of Bürgergesellschaft, which exceed the problematisation of the welfare state. Rather, some commentators pointed towards broader processes of social and cultural modernization. Following this line, it was the decline of cultural attributes of bourgeois life that was at the core of the predicament. Bürgergesellschaft was introduced as a counterpoint to the decline not only of a socio-economic configuration, but of the cultural repertory of attitudes underpinning such forms of life, of *Bürgerlichkeit*, understood with Wehler (2001) as cultural attributes, conventions and norms.

A significant number of contributions towards Bürgergesellschaft were worked out in the German South and bore marks of its more solidly conservative political culture (Ministerium für Arbeit und Soziales 2004; Glück 2007). It is in particular a certain type of civic localism that was at the core of such propositions, pointing to the associational life in towns and villages, with their structures of reciprocity and mutual assistance. While the generalization of Bürgergesellschaft for the purposes of social reform in the national context was often considered in such contributions, too, the concept remained frequently connected to the local context and, specifically, to the political project of fostering local structures of self-help (Ueltzhöffer and Ascheberg 1996).

In a second perspective on Bürgergesellschaft, a certain cultural conservatism was even more evident. *Bürgerlichkeit* was introduced as a repertory that was at risk due to processes of socio-cultural modernization. It was the generalization of cultural attitudes of *Bürgerlichkeit* that had provided for post-war civility and for the success of the Federal Republic. Such attitudinal repertories, it was suggested, were at risk. The permissiveness of the alternative left, the generalization of their disdain for more traditional values, and, very broadly, the cultural liberalization since the 1970s were captured with the notion of *Wertverlust* (loss of values) (e.g., Wickert 1994; see Duncker 2000 for a study of the theme of Wertverlust in German public discourse). Undersocialized groups on the margins of society were invoked to illustrate the consequences of this experience of loss. Crime and incivility were considered to be symptoms of the loosening of a valued-based consensus.

In a contribution to the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, Klaus Schroeder articulated this account and pointed to increasingly uncivil attitudes among young people. It is the "destruction of moral norms," the "ethical vacuum" and the "disoriented individualism" that had been precipitated by social and cultural liberalization. The declining force of such a value consensus has had disastrous consequences. The article was entitled: "Young offenders – neither right-wing radicals nor victims of individualization. Whether German or immigrants: they hate Bürgergesellschaft" (Schroeder 2004). The concept thus captured the desire for the preservation of a moral and cultural consensus. It was put in opposition in particular to the project of the *Achtundsechziger*, the movement towards social and cultural liberties that had emerged in the 60s and 70s. The *Bürgerlichkeit* of the post-war Federal Republic had provided for its success and relative civility (Schmid 2001); the dissolution of such cultural repertories accounted for a loss of values and personal disorientation. The Premier of the *Land* Baden-Württemberg, Lothar Späth (1999, 101) made a similar case for Bürgergesellschaft:

> The people look for a place of belonging (*Beheimatung*) in the social space…. This points to the desire of the people to step beyond anonymity and again into neighbourhood. This can be used to develop forms of devotion that fit to the circumstances of contemporary life.

Against the sense of disorientation that was considered to be a result of modernisation, the *Kommune*, a local sphere of self-help and reciprocity, was seen to provide for the alternative values and networks of interaction. Bürgergesellschaft at the local level was introduced as an alternative model of solidarity and consensual values that allowed for a sense of belonging, civility and effective problem-solving.

Although the conservative use of Bürgergesellschaft related, sometimes even closely, to a welfare-reformist counterpart, there was a significant disjuncture between what the two understandings were seen to require. For Rolf-E. Breuer (1999, 9), Bürgergesellschaft was about flexibility and the breaking up of ossified structures that impeded individual activity. The conservative understanding, by contrast, suggested that this vibrancy was already present in existing spheres of local self-help in the rural south.

Bürgergesellschaft and active citizenship

The self-help localism that characterised the conservative version of the Bürgergesellschaft concept connects to a third perspective that was prominently

articulated by liberal politicians, such as Hildegard Hamm-Brücher (1992; 1993; 2000; 2003). This version drew significantly on two positions that had emerged in preceding decades: first, an appreciation of the positive inputs of social movements (*Neue Soziale Bewegungen*) (Roth and Rucht 1991; Rucht 1994), and, second, the critique of the German political system for its alleged anti-democratic sclerosis and its inhospitability to direct democratic input (Schiller 2002).

Regarding the former, the position of social movements vis-à-vis German state structures had historically been ambiguous. The initial thrust of activity in the 1970s had been to provide for an alternative sphere of activity in opposition to an unaccommodating state, in some sense not unlike the intentions of the Polish Solidarity movement. The idea of an *außerparlamentarische Opposition* (extraparliamentary opposition) had been coined in relation to the political opposition of the student-led movement of the time and seemingly put high value on the refusal to integrate into established channels within the political system (Richter 1998). Its partial success was accompanied by an increasing entanglement of its representatives in the political institutions of the Federal Republic, most notably through the electoral success of the Green Party from the early 1980s onwards (Klein and Falter 2003).

Accordingly, ideas of Bürgergesellschaft that have been worked out from this perspective were – despite initially having separatist inclinations – not so much following Taylor's *L-stream*, an idea of autonomy and separation from the state, but were concerned to develop a notion of active citizenship that would underline the significance of self-organised social activity as a vital supplement to the state. Such ideas were frequently found in political initiatives aimed at encouraging active citizenship (*Engagementpolitik*). In an all-party parliamentary commission that was concerned with such ideas, Bürgergesellschaft was seen to indicate a system "in which citizens […] may substantially impact on the polity's fate through the involvement in self-organised associations and by using available avenues of participation" (Deutscher Bundestag 2002, 59). While not entirely dissimilar to the conservative tradition of local reciprocity, such interventions were directed more explicitly at goals of democratic reform, direct democracy, and the encouragement of citizens to participate in national politics.

The second perspective that loosely falls into this area is rooted in a traditional critique of the alleged party-political usurpation of the German state. The complaint is that, even though the basic law (*Grundgesetz*) had little to say about political parties, German realities were thoroughly party-political (von Beyme 1993). Occasionally, prominent representatives, such as the Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker (1992), had introduced similar suggestions into political debate. Hildegard Hamm-Brücher, a liberal politician, introduced a version of Bürgergesellschaft to underpin a similar criticism. According to Hamm Brücher (1993), a dissonance between "the letters and the spirit of our constitution" and political realities had deformed the political system to a situation of "party supremacy" (*Parteienherrschaft*). A "democracy of bystanders" (*Zuschauerdemokratie*) had emerged and citizens were actively discouraged from seeking to contribute to politics. Hamm-Brücher defined Bürgergesellschaft as a democratic project in opposition to this entrenched supremacy of political parties. It presented itself as a solution to a particular diagnosis of the reasons for political disaffection (see Arzheimer 2002 for a discussion of the concept of *Politikverdrossenheit*) and sought to transform the political system so that the direct input of citizens could be accommodated. This type of Bürgergesellschaft focused, in particular, on active citizenship as an essential addition to the political process and as a contributing factor for a vibrant democracy. It remains most closely associated with concerns that are articulated by the Green Party.

The kind of activity that was envisaged following this understanding of the concept was not primarily meant to provide the solution to problems of socio-economic inactivity caused by the 'passivating influences' of the welfare state. It related, however, to propositions towards civic solidarity. This understanding offered a response to situations where too much emphasis was seen to have been put on institutions, and too little on the civic self-organization of Bürgergesellschaft.

Uneasy syntheses: the social policy of Bürgergesellschaft

We have identified three understandings of Bürgergesellschaft, each of which responded to a particular account of social problems. Each of these perspectives also proposed notions of activity, either understood as social self-reliance, local mutuality or civic participation. These three accounts were not mutually exclusive and often coincided in political rhetoric. The horizon of active citizenship was drawn on in

contributions that sought to promote welfare reform. Following this line, examples of civic self-organization could be extended to provide for an alternative understanding of solidarity and as a substitute to the top-down workings of the welfare state. There were also overlaps between the conservative and the welfare-reformist perspective, both of which shared a focus on economic vibrancy.

Furthermore, the three accounts coincided for how they attributed problems to an overbearing state and its ossified institutions. Positions on how to solve such problems, however, differed inasmuch as they foregrounded either ideas of social and economic self-reliance, reinforced structures of local self-help that were underpinned by generalized *Bürgerlichkeit* or the reinvigoration of democratic potentials and active citizenship. What seemed to unite various versions of Bürgergesellschaft was the theme of activity and responsibility. Before turning to how these themes were developed and substantiated for policy-making purposes, we consider the adoption of Bürgergesellschaft by policy makers, most significantly by the then governing Social Democrats (SPD).

As was the case in a variety of European political contexts, the reconfiguration of social milieus has made German parties reflect on their constituencies (Bremer and Lange-Vester 2005). For the SPD it is in particular the dissolution of a reliably social-democratic working class, which had traditionally accounted for the core of its support, that precipitated attempts to redefine its target voters. The conventional self-description of the two large parties of the Federal Republic had been that of *Volksparteien*, parties whose claim, despite their respective accentuation of working and middle classes, was to represent the entirety of the electorate beyond narrow socio-economic interests. We have already noted that *Neue Mitte* – introduced and promoted as a German version of the Third Way – became the slogan for a more centrist reorientation of the Social Democrats.

Schröder's Zivile Bürgergesellschaft

This reorientation was perhaps most clearly discernible in a programmatic statement by Gerhard Schröder and Tony Blair, published in June 1999, that brought together the two notions (*Neue Mitte* and Third Way). Social justice, it was suggested, should not be "confused with the imposition of equality of outcome" (Blair and Schröder 2003, 111). Rather, new notions of solidarity needed to proceed by "rekindling a spirit of

community and solidarity, strengthening partnership and dialogue between all groups in society and developing a new consensus for change and reform" (2003, 112), not least in order to maintain "social cohesion in the face of real and perceived uncertainty" (2003, 112). As with the British Labour Party, this reorientation towards a middle ground meant that older programmatic tenets were adapted, ideas of redistributive justice reconsidered, and visions of social solidarity introduced as potential replacements to older, state-centred paradigms (Wehrhöfer 1999; Blair and Schröder 2003). In the case of the SPD, it was suggested that "Schröder's candidate for the ideological void is Bürgergesellschaft" (Heuser and Von Randow 2000).

Schröder presented his definition of Bürgergesellschaft in 2000. It thus preceded the social reform agenda that was launched after his re-election in 2002, the so-called *Agenda 2010*. Schröder's suggestions on Bürgergesellschaft mirrored a wide range of themes that had been established previously. The major threat that Schröder (2000a) identified was frustration (*Verdrossenheit*), fuelled by globalization, unemployment, right wing extremism. Such threats added up to a sense of insecurity as "society feels, more than it knows, that the certainties of the political and social geography are no longer solid" (Schröder 2000b, 19). In light of such challenges "a general feeling of uncertainty about what politics can do" (ibid.) prevailed. Responding to this situation, Schröder argued that it was necessary to develop a political project, *zivile Bürgergesellschaft*. This idea "is about a civilization of change through political integration and a new civic spirit (*Bürgerbewußtsein*). About increased self-reliance leading to the common good." This project would require a "better, an active and activating state" (ibid.) and types of welfare provision that replace effortless alimentation for a system that combines "support and demand" (*Fordern und Fördern*). It was introduced as a departure from the priorities of equality of outcome and towards equality of opportunities. "Under these conditions *Zivilgesellschaft* becomes an important space of social participation. Here the sense of identification needs to be created that ties the individual to the values and goals of society" (ibid.). As a new programme for the SPD, "it follows the principle of a return to small units" (ibid.). The support structures and the activity that could be engendered in such units were seen to allow, in turn, for the departure from traditional tenets on the welfare state without jeopardising social solidarity.

Schröder's version of *Zivile Bürgergesellschaft* drew on elements that were present in the streams of Bürgergesellschaft that we have identified previously. Political disaffiliation and the frustration of citizens vis-à-vis the lack of participatory avenues was equally part of this notion as was a certain type of self-help localism ("the return to small units"). While such ideas were not as pronounced as in the contributions from southern conservatives, they amounted to an interesting departure from social-democratic perspectives that traditionally proceeded from a more centralized perspective. Most conspicuously, it was the alleged sclerosis of the welfare state that permeated Schröder's contribution. The welfare state was said to be *unviable* in light of global pressures. In addition, it was also introduced as *undesirable* – a fairly radical position to come from within the SPD – as it was seen to be an obstacle towards individual initiative and self-reliance. Pressures of globalization had put not only principles of redistribution in doubt, they had also disrupted individual senses of security and belonging. Accordingly, *zivile Bürgergesellschaft* was introduced not just in response the dilemmas of the welfare state. It coincidentally was seen to offer – reminiscent of remedies against *fracture sociale* proposed by Jacques Chirac – an alternative sense of security and belonging that the welfare state could no longer provide.[72]

Agenda 2010

The re-election of Schröder's coalition government with the Green party coincided with the build-up to the Iraq War. In line with public opinion, the Chancellor came out strongly against the American-led invasion plans. Once re-elected, in 2003 Schröder reiterated reasons for the refusal to join the invasion in a major policy statement to parliament ('Courage for Peace, Courage for Change'), and connected this idea of a principled and courageous abstention to the courage required in the area of social reform (Schröder 2003): "Today, the restructuring the welfare state, its modernization, has become unavoidable." The diagnosis was strikingly similar to Herzog's intervention in 1997. He suggested that German economic performance was lagging behind; its welfare regime had become unaffordable and sclerotic thus thwarting individual

72 In relation to the concept of Bürgergesellschaft and, more particularly, to Schröder's definition of *Zivile Bürgergesellschaft*, Elisabeth Niejahr (2000) – drawing on survey data – pointed out that they were widely misunderstood. Zivilgesellschaft would regularly be mistaken for *Zivildienst*, the non-military part of Germany's previously compulsory national service scheme. The notion of the 'activating state', quite contrary to its intended meaning, would be mistaken for the desire to make the state more active in society.

responsibility and self-reliance. Accordingly, "ending welfare as we know it" became a slogan for the reform as sketched out in Parliament: "We will cut provisions, support self-reliance and demand more personal contributions." "Nobody will be permitted to lean back and do nothing at the expense of the community: who refuses to do reasonable work can count on sanctions." The policy statement marked the beginning of the most significant welfare reform effort in German post-war history (Meyer 2004). The various measures that have been introduced in its course have proved lasting and have changed the nature of the welfare state (Brütt 2003). Self-reliance and individual responsibility became the guiding themes in the re-organisation of health services, employment and pensions. Notably, such measures were introduced by pointing to the resources of Bürgergesellschaft as substitute to state-focused conceptions of social solidarity.

Activation in the Labour Market

The idea of the 'activating' or 'enabling' state in the area of employment preceded the *Agenda 2010*. Activation, we have suggested in Chapter 2, became a transnational paradigm in the 1980s and 90s that was adopted in a variety of domestic policy contexts. The OECD, for example, advocated such positions in the area of employment. It was suggested that the "realisation of the full human potential of the population involves the employment not only of the unemployed, but of all those who wish to participate – whether working full-time, part-time, or in casual employment" (OECD, Employment Outlook 1989, quoted in Walters 1997, 225). In a 1997 document with the title *Societal Cohesion and the Globalising Economy*, it was further suggested that in the "aggressive pursuit of active labour market policies" (OECD 1997, 14) "disincentives to work" (ibid.) had to be eliminated:

> The perverse consequences of 'centralised solidarity' are becoming clearer to all. In spite of the gargantuan sums which are claimed by these systems, they are constantly proving their inability to deal with problems of poverty and marginalisation for which they were – in theory – created. (OECD 1997, 74)

Civil society, the OECD argued, provided an antidote of activity to the pathological sclerosis of traditional welfare provision and assistance schemes. European policy positions on employment were similarly revised in the 1990s. The European Employment Strategy (EES) put a strong focus on insertion into the labour market and, more generally, on targeting the potential of all those parts of the population – welfare

recipients, pensioners, housewives – whose inactivity was seen to be problematic (Ludwig-Mayerhofer and Wroblewski 2004). A trans-national trend towards activation had been established (Taylor-Gooby 2005). In the case of Germany, it was the relatively high level of unemployment and the inability of its "conservative" welfare regime (Esping-Andersen 1990) to absorb the unemployed and otherwise economically inactive that made it particularly receptive to such ideas. Already the first coalition agreement between the Social Democrats and the Green Party followed the transnational trend: our "guiding principle (*Leitbild*) is the activating state" (Koalitionsvereinbarung 1998, para. 11). While such ideas remained largely rhetorical, there were clear advances towards the adoption of measures of activation from 2003 onwards. The reform of the welfare state became part of the government's programme (SPD/Bündnis 90/Die Grünen 2002, 52). In the area of employment and social assistance, it was various legislative initiatives – following the name of Peter Hartz an executive of *Volkswagen* who in 2002 had chaired a commission on the future of the welfare state – that brought major changes. The paradigm for these reforms was activation (Brütt 2003; Lessenich 2005). *Hartz II* and *III* brought about a new institutional structure for job centres and the establishment of the so-called *Ich-AG* (Me, Inc.) that provided monetary incentives for the unemployed to become self-employed and, as an alternative to unemployment, various measures geared towards the creation of a low-wage sector. *Hartz IV* initiated the combination of social assistance and unemployment benefit on a level below old social assistance provisions. The restructured job centres were instructed to facilitate and pressure the recipients of the new benefit scheme to transition back to work, to offer training and to penalize those who showed insufficient readiness for taking up work (Brütt 2003).

Conclusion

Regarding the connection between Bürgergesellschaft and the reform initiatives of the early 2000s, we have suggested that society had been reinvented in political discourse so that its 'activation' seemed a compelling response to widely acknowledged problems. The imaginary work invested into the idea of Bürgergesellschaft had anchored a new account of pertinent social problems in public discourse and had established its connection to a vision of generalized social activity. A contrast was established between pertinent problem images, social sclerosis and general social immobility on the one hand, and, on the other, an idea of activated sociability that would address various social problems. This idea of activation was introduced across different policy areas, for active

citizenship (Deutscher Bundestag 2002), pensions (the so-called *Riester* reforms), or labour market reform and changes to social assistance schemes (Hartz *et al.* 2002).

Various definitions of Bürgergesellschaft drew contrasts between scenarios of social disintegration, variously conceived in terms social collapse, moral decline or 'lagging behind', and the positive scenarios of new solidarity and generalized social activity that would account for a more desirable society. These contrasts are evident in the various public-relations campaigns, usually funded by employers' associations, that appealed directly to individual responsibility for the collective good. The *Du bist Deutschland* (You are Germany) campaign (Cords, Hoffjann and Schuettler 2006) or the public relations work of the *Intiative Neue Soziale Marktwirtschaft* (Speth 2004) or of the *BürgerKonvent* contrasted what was presented as a sclerotic, undesirable status quo with a more positive future ahead. They pointed to examples of self-help and to various instances of where 'ordinary citizens', faced with experiences of crisis, had assumed responsibility for the collective good. By assuming responsibility for one's own conduct, the message was, one would aspire to standards of excellence and fulfil one's patriotic duty. The nature of this responsibility and the direction of the required activity were usually unclear, thus supporting our suggestion that what is invoked in such campaigns, just as in the discourse of Bürgergesellschaft, is a sense of generalized activity. The implication was that whoever does not aspire to such standards, betrayed his or her patriotic duty.

Sephan Lessenich (2006b, 614) has suggested that the introduction of activation strategies is accompanied by the "re-interpretation of socio-structural into behavioural-psychological problems, the systematic inversion of collective and individual responsibilities, the rampant remoralisation of questions of social inequality." Bürgergesellschaft discourse, we have suggested, has played a part in this inversion. It was substantiated by a variety of traditions that could be mobilized in political debate: German *Bürgerlichkeit*, civil society ideas and how they were considered to have been at work the democratic transitions in Eastern Europe. In how the concept reflected particular understandings of state-society relationships that were entailed in these traditions, it was open to be defined towards a particular vision of political reform. Although definitions and deployments of the Bürgergesellschaft concept in political debate are not the exclusive site that would need to be considered for a full picture of changing trajectories identified in this chapter, it contributed to revisions and to a new

valorisation of social activity. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the concept contributed to changes in the landscape of debate on social issues. Individual responsibility and self-reliance, anchored in various conceptualisations of Bürgergesellschaft, informed a new social imaginary.

Chapter 5: Community Cohesion

Introduction

From a position of relative obscurity in conventional political language, the interest in cohesion has grown exponentially in British public discourse. Cohesion became the term of choice to characterize various social developments that were seen to put in doubt the stability of the social or moral fabric of British society. Conservative groups, such as Civitas or its offshoot, the Centre for Social Cohesion, use the concept to bring into focus the alleged weakness of liberal pluralism facing Islamic extremism.[73] But cohesion was also widely drawn on to express progressive concerns. The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) referred to cohesion to express an interest in racial equality and human rights. Non-governmental organisations and research institutes provided guidance on cohesion to local and national policy-makers.[74] Advocacy groups coined their requests accordingly. Just as in France, ministerial portfolios were changed to reflect the theme. While cohesion, as a remedy to social ills, was not on the list of older Labour priorities, in the New Labour years it became – and this will be the interest of this chapter – a significant concern.[75]

More significantly than its spread across the political spectrum, cohesion was conceived as a plausible perspective to address a variety of public policy issues, from urban renewal, immigration, integration, and citizenship, to policing, race relations, economic recovery and domestic and international security concerns. In the years after 2001,

73 See Conway (2009) and MacEoin (2009) for positions associated with Civitas. Conway (2009, 127) suggests that "main threats to social cohesion today emanate from two main sources: first, the radicalisation of disaffected young British-born Muslims; second, tensions between newly arrived immigrants, especially from Eastern Europe and other parts of the developing world, and those British citizens among whom they settle and with whom they compete for public services and jobs." The Centre of Social Cohesion and its director, Douglas Murray, are particularly concerned with the 'radicalisation' of British Muslims and how extremist views allegedly pervade the Muslim mainstream. Their positions are usually couched as expressions of a civilizational struggle between Western and non-Western – i.e. illiberal, oppressive – values.

74 For example the Institute for Community Cohesion (iCoCo), established by Ted Cantle who also chaired an influential inquiry that established the notion of community cohesion in British debate (Benjamin 2005). In his influential report, Cantle suggested that the "promotion of 'cohesion' could itself become a desirable and legitimate focus for funding" (Cantle 2001, para. 5.5.9).

75 The report of the Commission on Social Justice (1994), set up in 1992 by Labour leader John Smith, was arguably one of the first instances of how the new concerns with social ties that would characterise New Labour were articulated. The commission established that the "moral and social reconstruction of our society depends on our willingness to invest in social capital. We badly need to mend a social fabric that is so obviously torn apart. Social capital is a good in itself; it makes life possible. But social capital is also essential for economic renewal; the two go together" (1994, 308).

community cohesion became a central point of reference for the development of political strategies in response to various social problems.

The use of the past tense in this brief account seems appropriate. More recently, there has been a shift away from a language of social cohesion or community cohesion. A new concern with material disadvantages suffered by the 'white working class' became more relevant towards the end of Labour's third term. This new emphasis seemed to signal a departure from what was seen to have been an exaggerated focus on the conditions of ethnic minorities (Communities and Local Government 2010). Furthermore, the concern with 'violent extremism' and the Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda meant that the policy objective of community cohesion – although it had been developed under the impression of new concerns with domestic security – had to compete with different political agendas.[76] Arguably, towards the end of the Labour government community cohesion was a policy objective whose appeal had been exhausted.

This perception is reinforced since the new Coalition government is in place. What will replace community cohesion is unclear at this stage. The Big Society concept has so far not been operationalized for the kinds of problems that cohesion was supposed to address (Pattie and Johnston 2011). Although urban unrest in North London and across the country might create some openings for new political paradigms – not dissimilar to the juncture that brought about community cohesion – it is unlikely that community cohesion will be resuscitated. The Labour formulation of the concept has recently invited criticism from Tories for how it was seen to entail "social engineering" (Grieve 2010); although such objections were largely muted when cohesion was initially developed. Indeed, David Cameron (2007a; 2007b) had responded positively to the idea. In spite of some resistance towards the imposition of collective standards of

76 The turn to PVE, and in particular its 'Prevent' component, can be seen as a critical response to the allegedly unfocused nature of community cohesion priorities (Kundnani 2009). Conway (2009, 127) concludes a recent book-length treatment of the failures of 'community cohesion', by saying that "in order for Britain to enjoy social cohesion today" what is needed "for its foreign immigrants … and their children, to undergo what has been referred to as their patriotic assimilation." While the Prevent Violent Extremism (PVE) agenda and community cohesion are distinct in a number of significant ways, they share a perspective that foregrounds behaviour. Community cohesion is at risk due to the attitudes that are causing 'parallel lives'. PVE's *Prevent* component puts emphasis on radicalisation. While community cohesion spoke of vibrancy, social capital and attitudes, PVE addressed resilience (and continues doing so after its revision in June 2011). Both locate the problem they intend to address in the collective behaviour of post-immigration groups and make suggestions on how this behaviours should be changed (Husband and Alam 2011).

conduct, cohesion also appeared acceptable to liberals.[77] In fact, the notion seemed broadly attractive where certain social ills had to be identified but also where the scope of state activity was problematized and political localism considered as a plausible response.

The abandonment of community cohesion illustrates the limited shelf life of such political concepts, in as much as its adoption and prominence shows that social visions have the potential to become widely shared in a fairly short amount of time. The development of community cohesion as an account of social problems and as a recipe for their remedy was bound up in a new social rhetoric and informed by conceptions that had been prominently articulated since beginning in the early 1990s. This chapter puts particular emphasis on the development of these ideas, with the formation of New Labour's social imaginary as a starting point. It considers how this imaginary underpins the agenda of community cohesion. As in the preceding cases, it examines how community cohesion coincides with requirements of social activity that are, in the case of Britain, placed on the doorsteps of ethnic minority groups. The notion of self-segregation influenced understandings of community cohesion and informed political remedies of mixing and mingling, communal 'vibrancy', flexibility, and the request for new attitudes and dispositions. In the report of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion (CICC 2007), these behavioural characteristics were defined further and drawn on to point to desirable types of identification among British post-immigration groups – "from single identities to multiple identities" (CICC 2007, 34).

While there is no lack of critical analyses of the agenda of community cohesion that are of considerable merit,[78] the role that ideas of social activation have played in its development has been of relatively limited interest. The chapter begins with a brief discussion of some of the sociological findings that have informed the development of the concept of community cohesion and considers some of the suppositions this concept entails. Secondly, it steps back some 15 years and considers the formative stages of New Labour's conceptions of society. It retraces, thirdly, how such conceptions were deployed and explanatory accounts provided in public exchanges surrounding the

77 See, in particular, the Report on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society (Dahrendorf, Field and Hayman 1995). Ralf Dahrendorf (1999, 16) later put some distance between his perspective on cohesion and New Labour's version and went on to criticise the "authoritarian temptations" in the latter.

78 See, for example, David Robinson (2005), Claire Worley (2005), Paul Bagguley and Yasmin Hussain (2008) and Jonathan Burnett (2004) and Derek McGhee (2003; 2005)

'urban unrest' of 2001 and, fourthly, in the various public inquiries and reports into the unrest. These reports established community cohesion as a political priority and governmental objective. We conclude with a discussion of remedies and their suppositions in the report of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion (CICC 2007).

The idea of community cohesion

Community cohesion, David Robinson (2005, 1412) suggests, "had no place in the vocabulary of urban theory or public policy prior to the disturbances in 2001". But even this may be an understatement. Community cohesion and cohesion were not merely absent from British public debate, but conspicuously so. Up to the early 1990s, expressions of concern about social integration in Britain were not very widely couched in the according language. While social policy at the European level, such as under the auspices of Jacques Delors at the European Commission (Helly 1999; Atkinson 2008), developed and deployed the concept of cohesion, its British uptake in the 1980s and early 1990s remained relatively negligible. Until the early 1990s, it could have been argued that cohesion was part of a different, continental or maybe French tradition of conceiving of society. A possible starting point, the republican concern with the dangers of political factionalism, would have been considered less pronounced in Britain. The conception of society as an organism in need of cohesion, would have seemed more in line with German intellectual traditions than with their British counterparts.

Not merely in terms of intellectual traditions, but within British political rhetoric, the concern with social ties and the need for their maintenance had a limited following. As is well known, Thatcherite conservatism had little patience for society as a frame of reference in political debate.[79] In the 1980s, Labour, too, seemed to put scarce emphasis on social and communal ties: a fact that Tony Blair would continuously highlight as a shortcoming in his concern to 'modernise' the party.[80] It would be no exaggeration to

79 Although the Thatcherite disavowal of society is often misreported and probably best understood as an attempt to rework a social imaginary, notably one where social solidarity resides in relations among individuals or within the family (Dean 1999, see Chapter 1).

80 There are, however, important intellectual traditions on both sides of the political divide that appear more compatible with an interest in 'social unity', notably Labour's Guild Socialist orientation or One Nation conservatism, though these have been fairly marginal in British politics for some time. While there are few 'One Nation' Tories (Walsha 2003; Oborne 2011), Labour's pre-Fabian origins have recently attracted new interest, notably in the discovery of working class identities as a salient concern and in the concern with the relative conservatism of Labour's natural constituencies outside of the middle class circles (Cruddas and Rutherford 2008; Glasman 2011).

suggest that into the 1990s not only cohesion, but the very problem to which cohesion would later be seen to supply a response, were largely unacknowledged in British public debate.

It is only in how the 2001 unrest in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham was analyzed and interpreted that *community cohesion*, or a lack thereof, was introduced in British political language. New concerns, new problems and new social visions were articulated and contrasted with older perceptions, notably in how the media, politicians and commissioned reports provided analyses of the unrest and made suggestions about the condition of British society. Finney and Simpson (2009, 93-4) point to how this occurred:

> [T]he summaries and the unchallenged media headlines that followed the reports changed the language of race relations to talk of 'self-segregation, 'parallel lives', lack of 'meaningful exchanges', 'isolationist attitudes' of community leaders, and 'cities gripped by fear'.

In 2001, however, community cohesion did not emerge out of nowhere – 'cohesion' as well as 'community', corresponding notions of social responsibility and a social imaginary of moral and social decline had been introduced in previous exchanges and as part of the New Labour platform. This was in response to changing intellectual currents in thinking about society and to a new problematisation of the social integration of ethnic minorities in British society.

Community cohesion is usually introduced to emphasize the significance of "shared lives" – as distinguished from "parallel lives" (Cantle 2001, para. 2.1; 2005, 72-3) – for the quality of life in British cities and towns and as a resolution to significant social problems on a wider, national scale.[81] In a widely cited definition by the Local Government Association (2002, 6), community cohesion is seen to entail "a common vision and a sense of belonging", the "diversity of people's backgrounds and

81 Ted Cantle (2001; 2005) distinguishes between community cohesion, as specifically about social-cultural divisions, and social cohesion in relation to socio-economic concerns. Conventionally, however, both accounts seem to overlap in media and public policy discourse, and Cantle himself tends to connect both in ways that are not always consistent (eg., 2001, paras. 2.12-3; 2005, 52). More generally, Cantle's work on community cohesion seems frequently somewhat disconnected from its public policy uses, and Cantle draws on this disjuncture to shield his contribution from critique. In a review of their book for the *Journal of Social Policy*, for example, Cantle (2009) takes Finney and Simpson (2009) to task for their alleged distortion of Trevor Phillips' account ('sleepwalking into segregation') and of his own work. He is generally defending his own conceptual definitions, and not the various ways in which these ideas have been deployed in political rhetoric and the practice of a political agenda that he endorsed and furthered.

circumstances are appreciated and positively valued", people "from different backgrounds have similar life opportunities", and "[s]trong and positive relationships are being developed between people from different backgrounds". It responds to concern with 'ethnic segregation' or 'ethnic self-segregation' as identified in patterns of settlement, education, political mobilization and general social contact. More than an empirical finding, community cohesion usually follows a prescription as to how the causes of segregation need to be tackled and how 'parallel lives' may become shared. In contrast to previous political concerns with racism and racial equality, anti-discrimination, and socio-economic deprivation, it loosely credits attitudes of post-immigration communities, their inflexibility and inward orientation, as the main causes of various social problems and for the conditions of their lives, if such conditions leave to be desired.

In this sense, the diagnosis that community cohesion offers is ambiguous and problematic, similar to *Bürgergesellschaft* and *cohésion sociale*. 'Parallel lives' or 'ethnic self-segregation' are concepts that are metaphorically laden and contested, not merely for their political implications but for their very empirical reality. Particularly Trevor Phillip's statement that Britain was 'sleep-walking into segregation' has been controversial (Finney and Simpson 2009, 45-56; Husband and Alam 2011). Undoubtedly, in some British localities there have been changes in the composition of populations in recent decades, an increasing diversity in the population mix, and the concentration of post-immigration groups in certain urban and sub-urban areas, for example in parts of London or conurbations in Yorkshire and the West Midlands. The picture, however, is diverse even among adjacent towns and localities. While in some areas the trend is towards ethnic homogeneity, there are contravening trends towards increasing diversity in others (Burgess, Wilson and Lupton 2005).

Empirically, the idea of segregation does not seem to present itself for the alarmist scenarios of disintegration and separatism that are often evident where it is invoked. If segregation is seen to suggest that in some parts of Britain there are high concentrations of ethnic minority populations, it makes a valid point. If it is seen to imply, as it often does, a trend towards increasing ethnic homogeneity across the board, it offers an incomplete picture. Finney and Simpson (2009, 115-139) have recently compiled data that suggests that that there is no national trend either way. Simon Burgess and others

(Burgess, Wilson et al. 2005; Burgess and Worth 2011) have shown that patterns and dynamics of settlement in contemporary Britain are complex.

However, it is not merely the sociological findings about 'segregated' patterns of settlement, but behavioural accounts of 'self-segregation' that underpin the analysis of community cohesion. The alleged inward orientation of ethnic minorities in Britain, their reclusiveness or, with Robert Putnam (2007), their 'hunkering down' is said to account for ethnic segregation and by extension for a variety of social problems in urban Britain. In the early 2000s, this analysis was developed and community cohesion was defined to address self-segregation, which had become a widely accepted truth in British public debate.[82] While this chapter does not contribute to the evaluation of the empirical validity of this analysis, or more generally of the sociological assumptions and theories underpinning it, it is interested in the conditions that accounted for the success and for the influence of this account.

New Labour and Community

While such concerns were largely absent in the 1980s, notions of social and political unity became a more central feature of British political debate in the 1990s.[83] New concerns emerged and were politically articulated across a variety of political fields, such as regarding devolution or in relation to British citizenship, frequently considered to lack the symbolism required for collective identification (see Kisby 2007). A concern with social unity was also articulated in the course of Labour's realignment in the 1990s and not least in order to sketch out a social vision that could be strategically deployed to contrast with Conservative priorities. The following retraces aspects of this realignment

82 This is despite the fact that contravening evidence shows that ethnic minority populations generally wish to live in diverse and not in mono-cultural surroundings (Peach 2009). Finney and Simpson (2009, 100) cite a study about attitudes in Oldham and Rochdale that concludes that "housing aspirations and expectations of White and Asian young people are remarkably similar" (see Simpson, Phillips and Hussain 2007). The account of 'self-segregation', however, underpins public policy, notably where, as Kalra and Kappor (2009, 1411) put it, this account "rather than representing choice of residence, evolves into a choice in values. These conceptual moves, which are also present in the adoption of a social capital framework to enhance community cohesion, result in the initial targeting of Muslims, but enable a much wider set of disciplines to encompass other 'problem' groups."

83 The Report of the Commission on Social Justice, set in motion by Blair's predecessor John Smith concluded that "[w]e badly need to mend a social fabric that is so obviously torn apart" (Commission on Social Justice 1994, 308). The Report on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society, commissioned by the Liberal Democrats and chaired by Lord Dahrendorf (1995), came to similar conclusions.

and the articulation of new social visions with a particular emphasis on the rhetoric of Tony Blair.

A moral crisis

In February 1993, two-year-old James Bulger was abducted in a Merseyside shopping district, beaten to death and his body dumped on a railway track. The perpetrators, two ten-year-olds, were caught on camera luring the toddler away, were identified and subsequently sentenced to a minimum of ten years in prison. The murder triggered some soul-searching on the state of British society, its moral foundations and the conduct of its young people. Beyond the request for stiffened penalties for young offenders, the media reaction reflected a sense of helplessness. "A society ... has suddenly caught its image in the mirror and dislikes what it sees", wrote the head of the Catholic Church in England (Hume 1993). Commentators lamented "society's growing indifference and our increasing isolation" (Phillips and Kettle 1993) and suggested that there was "[s]omething rotten in modern society" (Daily Mail 1993), or that "[s]omething has gone dreadfully wrong in Britain" (Lynn 1993). Different root causes for the act were identified. Conservative cultural criticism, the bemoaning of lost virtues, contrasted with a more widely expressed sense of consternation in face of an act that seemed to disrupt what was thought to be possible – and to point to larger deficiencies in the moral make-up of British society (Hay 1995).

The response of the Conservative government to this state of moral consternation was considered insufficient. Home Secretary Ken Clarke promised harsher penalties and announced plans for 'secure training centres' for young offenders (Travis and Bates 1993). At the same time, he was accused of scoring "easy political points" (The Guardian 1993) by blaming Labour for being soft on crime and thus diminishing the severity of the act in the back and forth of party politics. The same complaint was levelled against Prime Minister John Major, who immediately after the Bulger murder, announced a 'crusade against crime'. Major's prescription, to "condemn a little more, understand a little less" (cited in Holborow 1993), appeared as a stereotype. Toughness on crime, longer sentences and less empathy for young offenders did not seem to appeal to the public in an environment where the concern was about more than the penalisation of young offenders.

The Conservatives' display of law and order toughness seemed to ignore that elements of a "new punitiveness" (Garland 1996, 445) had been widely adopted. Tough criminal justice measures could not easily be drawn on to distinguish the Tory prescription. Moreover, it ignored that anxieties seemed to be directed at the state of the social fabric and society's moral foundations. The Tory response was criticized by representatives of the Church of England for their neglect of the impact of unemployment and social polarisation (Copley 1993). The reproach was that Conservative politics was at least partly to blame for the growing sense of moral disorientation. From this perspective, the Bulger murder seemed to "epitomise … the crisis of the economic individualism ushered in by Margaret Thatcher. … [T]his was what happened when there was no such thing as society" (Jordan 1999, 203). In the *New Statesman*, Jeremy Seabrook deplored the Conservative's double standards "when they spoke of the breaking-up of mining communities in the mid-eighties as a 'good investment', and when the ruin of all solidarities, collectivities and communal endeavour has been at the heart of their mission for the past 15 years" (Seabrook 1993, 13). The murder seemed to shed light on the nature of Thatcherism and the amorality of its social and economic philosophy.

New social visions

The exchanges about the meaning and significance of the murder occurred against the background of newly salient concerns with values and the moral constitution of society. Around that time, Geoff Mulgan (1995, 13) suggested that a new sense of insecurity across the Western world had triggered "an intensive search for a sense of community cohesion, for ties that can bind people together". David Marquand (1996, 9, emphasis in original) saw the still "inchoate and tentative" intimations of this newly emerging theme: the "threat of fragmentation and anomie have fostered a new concern with the dangers of social exclusion and the *a priori* necessity for social cohesion". Will Hutton (1995, 23-4) observed that Britain faced "explosive levels of stress. The individualist, *laissez-faire* values which imbue the economic and political elite have been found wanting – but with the decline of socialism, there seems to be no coherent alternative in the wings." Represented by Mulgan, Marquand and Hutton, Labour's intellectual vanguard had discovered a new political project that responded to perceptions of uncertainty and of a moral crisis.

The concern to remove "the factors which are fostering the social diseases of drugs, crime, political extremism and social unrest", as Peter Barclay (1994, 34) put it in a report for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, had been established in British political discourse prior to Labour's 'modernisation' and the soul-searching over the Bulger murder. How such concerns were about to be expressed and linked to a new social vision, however, was not established. The notion of social cohesion was not yet widely drawn on in the political debate. The concerns that it would capture, however, had become politically relevant. A few days after James Bulger's murder, the *Daily Mail* (1993) editorialized that

> [t]here can be no cosy antidote to crime, no easy reversal of moral decline. Yet a political leader of vision could find a self-questioning and fearful people more than ready to respond to the stern penal and social measures that are needed. (Daily Mail 1993)

Newly appointed as Shadow Home Secretary, Tony Blair's response effectively pre-empted the accusation that had commonly been levelled against the left. Freshly inspired by encounters with New Democrat strategists of the Clinton administration, Blair had just introduced a signature phrase, "tough on crime and tough on the underlying causes of crime" (Blair 1993a, 27; see Rentoul 1995; 2001, 192-4), and was able to brush off Conservative accusations of being 'soft' or 'out of touch' on crime with relative ease.[84] A few weeks before the James Bulger murder, Blair had set out his position on law enforcement, graciously complimenting the Tories for aspects of their policies, while blaming the Conservative government for missing the point on the root causes of crime: "crime, ultimately, is a problem that arises from our disintegration as a community […]. It can only be resolved by acting as a community, based on a new bargain between individual and society" (Blair 1993a, 28). In a fragmented, polarised and morally disoriented society, Blair suggested, high levels of crime were bound to occur.

The way Blair introduced the theme of community seemed to capture the Conservative concern with the loosening of a value-based consensus while pointing out ways to address this moral crisis through a new emphasis on responsibility. Blair (1996, 244) suggested that there "is nothing more destructive or corrosive in Britain today than the

84 John Rentoul points out that Blair at this stage "had at last found a populist language in which to express the ethical socialist ideas which had formed his political convictions. Almost overnight he began to talk with the breadth and confidence of a possible Prime Minister" (2001, 198).

tearing of the social fabric and the rupture of social cohesion. We live in a society increasingly scarred by crime, persistent high unemployment, and family and social disintegration". He went on to argue that "the breakup of family and community bonds is intimately linked to the breakdown in law and order" (Blair 1996, 247).[85]

Blair elaborated on these ideas in a programmatic speech on crime in Wellingborough, February 19, 1993, one week after the murder of James Bulger.

> A solution to this disintegration … must come from the rediscovery of a sense of direction as a country and most of all from being unafraid to start talking again about the values and principles we believe in and what they mean for us not just as individuals but as a community. We cannot exist in a moral vacuum. If we do not learn and then teach the value of what is right and what is wrong, the result is simply moral chaos which engulfs us all. (cited in The Independent 2007)

Blair's first notable appearance as Shadow Home Secretary was generally well received (e.g., Wintour and White 1993). It seemed to provide a more rational and empathetic alternative to the Tory's punitive rhetoric and a worthy attempt to highlight solutions to the moral dilemmas of the nation. Blair was complimented on a "fresh, non-ideological approach on crime and its roots" (The Independent 1993, February 20), and other editorials commended Blair for realizing that "the solution does not simply lie in legislation, but in the rediscovery of a new sense of direction" (The Guardian 1993, February 22).

New Labour's moral agenda fell on fertile ground, presumably not least as a result of widespread disenchantment with 14 years of Tory rule. Blair seemed to prevail in the struggle over the interpretation of the Bulger murder for how he combined visionary social thinking with a 'law and order' rhetoric (Walker 1997; Le Grand 2003). The features of this moral vision remained vague in 1993 and would be elaborated upon in the years up to 1997. Blair's language of social morality and individual responsibility, illustrated with this snapshot picture, seemed to resonate with wide-spread public sentiments.[86] The notion of cohesion – without indicating a consolidated political programme – was increasingly used in this context:

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85 The report of the Commission on Social Justice, set in motion by Blair's predecessor John Smith concluded that "[w]e badly need to mend a social fabric that is so obviously torn apart" (Commission on Social Justice 1994, 308). On these issues, the 'Report on Wealth Creation and Social Cohesion in a Free Society", commissioned by the Liberal Democrats and chaired by Lord Dahrendorf (1995) came to similar conclusions.

86 Much has been made of the diverse intellectual influences that underlie New Labour and, specifically, the worldview of Tony Blair (Driver and Martell 1997). Commentators point to the

> Individuals prosper best within a strong and cohesive society. […] But a strong society should not be confused with a strong state; or powerful collectivist institutions. […] It is in the search for this different, reconstructed, relationship between individual and society that ideas about 'community' are found. (Blair 1995, The Guardian, March 23)

In his 2010 memoirs, Blair points to the Bulger episode and acknowledges that he had used the incident to his strategic advantage: "Very effectively I made it into a symbol of a Tory Britain in which, for all the efficiency that Thatcherism had achieved, the bonds of social and community well-being had been loosed, dangerously so" (2010, 57). He goes on to add, "I did it sincerely" (2010, 204), but suggests that his analysis of social breakdown was "easy but ultimately flawed". Society "hadn't [broken down] as a whole, only in part. I was to come to the right conclusion only at the very end of my premiership: instead of focusing general social policy on this class of people, they need specific, targeted action" (ibid.). Notwithstanding this clarification, the reference to how cohesion was at risk due to the misguided and amoral policies of the Conservatives was characteristic of the language of the time. The "dogmatism of the neoliberal Right had become a serious threat to national cohesion", Blair (1998, 6) suggested in his Third Way pamphlet. Since it was not feasible, he suggested, to revert back to a "statist social democratic model" (ibid.), new political orientations were needed.

The "class of people" that presented a test case for the development of policies that would correspond to this social vision were ethnic minority youths in the English North. Episodes of unrest in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham provided an occasion to develop policy strategies that followed the intellectual currents that had been defined in previous years: an emphasis on communal solidarity and morality, on social ties and responsibility. While the Bulger episode shows how a new social imaginary had begun to be articulated, the unrest in 2001 presented the occasion to flesh out a corresponding political agenda that was focused on ethnic minority groups.

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communitarianism of Amitai Etzioni (1993; 1996), to John Macmurray (Rentoul 2001: 41-3; Bevir and O Brien 2003), to Christian socialism (Wilkinson 1998), to social capital theorizing or even One Nation Conservatism (Kenny and Smith 1997). Hale (2006) points to significant discontinuities between communitarian thinking and New Labour ideas for how its conception of a conditional relationship between rights and responsibilities contradicts the communitarian disavowal of 'procedural' ties (2006, 163-4). Blair himself has shown little interest in consistency in this regard and had acknowledged a variety of possible influences on New Labour's ethical positions (Blair 2000).

Urban Unrest

There is a certain danger in overstating the significance of rhetoric and speech-making of a single, albeit influential, actor. We do not suggest that Tony Blair shaped the terms of the political agenda single-handedly, but rather that he influentially introduced ideas that became intellectually and strategically viable. Blair himself showed not too much interest in the politics of ethno-cultural diversity in Britain, and the unrest of 2001 is not even acknowledged in his 2010 memoirs. Themes of community, responsibility, moral conduct and social ties, however, had been established and became part of the repertory of arguments that the Labour government and its various exponents deployed when the disorder of 2001 had to be interpreted and when it became necessary to propose political initiatives in response.

This section considers debates about 'ethnic unrest' in 2001 that took place against the background of a new problematisation of cultural diversity in Britain. We have already pointed to how self-segregation had become a significant concern in political debate. This new focus was accompanied by a reconsideration of the political paradigms of ethnic minority integration in Britain, notably of multiculturalism. As a matter of principle the new concern with social unity, as it began to be more prominently articulated in the 1990s, does not necessitate a rejection of theoretical models multiculturalism (see Parekh 2000; Modood 2007). In practice, however, new concerns with 'segregation' or 'ethnic separatism' have often resulted in a rejection of multiculturalism or in new problematisations of cultural diversity. Kevin Robins *et al.* (2001, 81) thus point to a "national mentality … [that] regards diversity, difference and complexity as a problem. Diversity is a problem because it is associated with the (imagined) dangers of cultural and political 'fragmentation' and 'disorder'." This problematisation of diversity is often difficult to pin down, and the various lines of attack on multiculturalism are difficult to disentangle (Lentin and Titley 2011). Moreover, it is often unclear whether attacks have led to changed political practices of ethnic minority accommodation or whether they constitute changed rhetorical priorities that may not fundamentally impact on established practices of minority accommodation (Meer and Modood 2009; Modood forthcoming).

Even where the practical implications of a new rhetoric are unclear, it may still be significant to consider changing emphases for what they suggest and for how they

channel available political choices. A new focus has been put on dangers of ethnic segregation, which is seen to have resulted from an overly liberal and uncommitted attitude towards shared values and unifying ideas. In this context, new expectations and demands have been formulated as to how ethnic minority communities should relate to majority society. Recurrent moral panics over immigration further contributed to notable changes in how the media and policy-makers responded to such issues. Back *et al.* observe, in this regard, how the 2001 incidents functioned as a further "factor in prompting a shift away from [the] celebration of multicultural diversity" (2002, 446), and towards a concern with cohesion, shared identity, national togetherness, Britishness, and common moral bonds. The unrest of 2001 proved to be a catalyst for how such anxieties began to be articulated as part of a political programme.

Precedents

Historically, the United Kingdom has seen numerous outbreaks of urban violence (Tilly 1995; Archer 2000). This stands in conspicuous contrast, as Michael Rowe (1998, 11) observes, to a "widespread amnesia in respect of Britain's riotous history", which is persistently expressed in a tone of bewilderment over how the values of British civility allow for uncivil conduct. Britain's history "appears remarkably turbulent, with frequent outbursts of disorder" (Benyon 1987, 26). Since the 1980s, "ethnic riots" or "race riots" have become an established category for a type of urban violence with ethnic minority participation (Rowe 1998, 6). It is, in particular, a series of unrest in 1980, 1981 and 1985 that would determine how this category of disorder was defined.

The 1981 incidents in Brixton led to a debate that was only equalled twenty years later, with the development of the agenda of community cohesion. While Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher attributed the Brixton riots to 'criminal thugs', Labour's Roy Hattersley pointed towards underlying causes of "despair and disillusion" (quoted in Benyon 1984, 5). The report into the 1981 disorder by Lord Scarman offered a meticulous narrative of the unfolding of the riots and an interpretation that seemed to take seriously the motivation of young black rioters: "It was a spontaneous act of defiant aggression by young men who felt themselves hunted by a hostile police force" (Scarman 1986, 46). Although the overt racism of stop-and-search practices by the Metropolitan police was downplayed (and 'institutional racism' only identified 18 years later in the Macpherson Report), Scarman offered a somewhat humane characterization

of those involved in the incidents, their motivations and grievances. The unrest in Toxteth, Liverpool, of the same year provoked additional efforts of interpretation and a relatively sympathetic long-term response by the Thatcher government that put Michael Heseltine (the "Minister for Merseyside") in charge of a task force to address underlying causes of the unrest (see Parkinson and Duffy 1984).

In relation to recurrent episodes of urban disorder in the 1980s, John Benyon (1987, 26) points to three different perspectives.[87] A *conservative* perspective tends to emphasise the irrationality of the unrest and underlines the rioters' motivation to, quite simply, "loot and rob" (ibid., 30). Criminality is the central theme of this conservative reading, and it is either the gullibility of misguided youth or their inherent "thuggishness" that is emphasized. *Liberal* perspectives, by contrast, tend to focus on conditions of unrest and consider how police misconduct, discrimination, and socio-economic disadvantagement prepare the ground for outbreaks of violence. The Scarman Report into the Brixton disorder can be considered as a liberal attempt "to understand the viewpoint of the rioters" (Lea 2004, 186). In the liberal types of explanation, disorder tends to be rationalized and attributed to structural conditions. A *radical* perspective attributes agency to those involved in the unrest and focuses on their collective action against oppressive structures and practices, but has been marginal in the interpretation of most episodes of unrest in Britain.[88]

The threefold distinction Benyon proposes corresponds to perspectives and explanations offered in 2001 that are of interest in the following discussion. The liberal type might emphasise issues of economic disadvantage and the experience of racism. The radical perspective – as marginal in 2001 as it was in 1981 – would consider the unrest as 'revolt', 'rebellion' or 'uprising' (Campaign against Racism and Fascism (CARF) 2001). The conservative perspective focuses on irrational behaviour, crime, and 'thuggery'. Paul Gilroy (2004, 134) sums up this perspective: "the rioters rioted because

87 This corresponds to a distinction in Dilip Hiro's authoritative history of British race relations. Hiro (1992, 91) sees 'three schools' in how riots were analyzed: "those who attributed the disorder to sheer criminality and the propensity among young hooligans to imitate what they had seen on television screens. There were others who put the primary blame on the dreadful living conditions of the populace in inner cities. And finally there was a school which considered police misconduct towards blacks as the prime cause of the conflagrations." See Slavoj Žižek (2011) for an interesting discussion of the applicability of these categories to the riots of August 2011.

88 Paradoxically, the political motives of those involved in the 1981 unrest – just as those of participants in some outbreaks of historical unrest – and their legitimate grievances about racist policing in particular are now widely acknowledged.

they were alien. The proof of their alienness was the fact that they had rioted." John Solomos (1992, 117) concurs and points to connections between race and crime that had been established in public discourse:

> [A] continuing preoccupation throughout the 1970s was the connection between deprivation and supposedly pathological or weak black cultures which produced 'special' problems... This ideology had the effect of externalising the source of the 'problem', and locating it firmly within the black communities themselves.

While the 'problematic' communities of the 1980s were of African Caribbean ethnicity, in 2001 the concern was predominantly with Pakistani or Bangladeshi heritage youths. Interpretations of the unrest became a site of debate about socio-economic, cultural, or religious features of these social groups, just as the analysis of unrest in the 1980s, and accounts pointing towards 'Black criminality', had been concerned with the African Caribbean presence in the United Kingdom (Hall 1978; Gilroy 1982). In these accounts it was not merely particular social or political problems that were negotiated, but the signification of the presence of these post-immigration groups in British society. The rapid shift of interest from the causes of the riots towards broader socio-cultural conditions is characteristic for this type of negotiation.

As was the case with the Brixton riots, the 2001 incidents invited a range of different explanations. While the earliest incidents in Oldham seemed contested, since no coherent 'reading' of the events had been established, accounts were consolidated and reinforced when the unrest extended into August. The following sections explore the development of these interpretations.[89]

Oldham

On 21 April 2001, Walter Chamberlain, a retired Oldham bus conductor, was beaten by a teenager who, reportedly, told the retiree to 'get out of our area'. Over the next few days, Chamberlain's bruised face appeared widely across the news media. It appeared to reinforce the notion that areas with large ethnic minorities populations had become inaccessible to 'white people' and 'no-go-areas' (Craig 2001; Bunyan 2001a). Police reports on increasing racial violence against whites further contributed to such perceptions (BBC 2001, February 9). The *Daily Mail* channelled this anxiety and

89 It is beyond the scope of this presentation to offer an account of how the events unfolded in either Oldham, Burnley or Bradford in much detail (however, see Kundnani 2001; Bagguley and Hussain 2003).

located the attack on Chamberlain in the context of ongoing debates about immigration, integration, and Britishness.

> Oldham is being torn apart by two warring cultures. People like Walter Chamberlain feel marginalised and threatened by brutal youths who wish to gain ascendancy in the place of his birth. … The elderly citizens of Oldham are beginning to feel like isolated strangers in their town. (Lee-Porter 2001)

Playing on similar registers, the British National Party (BNP) announced that it would be competing for Oldham's two parliamentary seats and launched a series of campaign events. The National Front (NF) started marching in Oldham, demanding "racial justice" for Chamberlain and "white people" (The Guardian 2001, May 6; Tolputt 2001, The Independent, April 28). All this occurred against the background of strongly expressed concerns about issues of asylum and immigration in the run-up to the 2001 general election. The Conservative leader, William Hague, travelled to Dover to announce that with under his Premiership Britain would be "a safe haven, not a soft touch" (quoted in Collings and Seldon 2001, 633).

While a number of narratives exist that emphasize varying aspects of the incidents, core facts are undisputed. In response to racist attacks by right-wing extremists which had taken place over an extended period of time, groups of predominantly Asian youths went to the streets, and incidents culminated between the 26th and 28th of May, in street battles between a few hundred youths and riot police (see for example Ahmed *et al.* 2001). Variation among accounts is largely part of broader differences in appreciating root causes of the occurrences, such as the Campaign against Racism and Fascism's (2001) emphasis on the history of police violence and right-wing extremist intimidation, or, by contrast, the focus on irrational and wanton violence (Bunyan 2001b, Daily Telegraph, May 28). Indeed, while the "worst race riots ever seen in Britain" (Disley 2001, Daily Record, May 28), appeared to leave commentators perplexed, the news media as well as politicians quickly began to offer explanations of the events. Liberal and conservative accounts were deployed and the concern with communal ties and social disintegration, in line with intellectual currents and New Labour priorities, operationalized for post-riot analysis.

Simon Hughes put the blame on William Hague and the Tory's anti-asylum rhetoric: "If politicians talk up things that encourage the view of racial difference then there is an indirect likelihood that will resonate with people, particularly with young people,

impressionable people" (in Jenkins, Baldwin and Kennedy 2001, The Times, May 28). The Conservatives resented the suggestions and were supported by leading Labour politicians, such as Blair, who insisted that "the central issue was one of law and order, rather than the language used by politicians" (cited in Johnston 2001). Ken Livingstone, for Labour's left wing, pointed out that the lessons of the Macpherson Report on institutional racism had not sufficiently been considered in Oldham (Livingstone 2001, The Independent, May 30). Institutional racism and heavy-handed practices of an ethnically unrepresentative police force, he suggested, partially accounted for the incidents.

The response to Simon Hughes had established a prominent theme that was reinforced in the media. "There is no evidence … that Saturday's unrest was significantly different from the yobbery that disfigures so many British towns at weekends", it was suggested in *The Daily Telegraph* (2001). In *The Independent*, Deborah Orr argued that the perpetrators of the attack against Walter Chamberlain and the instigators of the disturbances should not to be treated separately from the average criminal: "They do vile and violent things because they enjoy it. But unfortunately there are a lot of people around them who seem willing to confirm that calling bad behaviour race war makes it a political act and not just pointless, ignorant, bullying, hate" (Orr 2001, The Independent, May 29). The assumption, it seems, was that the classification of the incidents as a distinct event, one that required interest in causes and conditions, would somehow exculpate the perpetrators and give the unrest a significance it did not deserve.

Although analyses that were considering 'root causes' of the events were thus rejected by a conservative critique – widely shared by Labour and Conservatives – interpretations of the disorder were only beginning to be developed. Critics of multiculturalism, such as Norman Tebitt, pointed to Oldham and suggested that "[t]wo societies living side-by-side can lead to difficult moments" (cited in Jenkins, Baldwin et al. 2001, The Times, May 28). Yasmin Alibhai-Brown suggested that recent social policy "has concentrated on issues of equity and even separate provision, and no attention has been paid to the issues that connect people" (Alibhai-Brown 2001a, The Independent, May 28). Melanie Phillips argued that a "multicultural agenda" had led to "tribalism": "Only a common culture binds everyone together. … A harmonious culture depends not on telling people they are different but on forging common bonds" (Phillips 2001, Sunday Times, June 3). The problem with multiculturalism, it was suggested in

the centre-left and centre-right media, "is [that it is] a recipe for permanent division" (Marrin 2001, The Guardian, May 29). The lack of meaningful interaction between Asian and majority communities became a central feature in the analysis of what had if not caused then at least facilitated the violence. The incidents in Oldham were presented as an indictment of policies that were alleged to have put too much emphasis on the separateness of groups and communities. The violence that had been witnessed in Oldham was beginning to be attributed to segregation and self-segregation, and to how misguided multicultural policies had led to 'yobbery' and the loss of control among ethnic minority youths.[90]

Burnley

While the incidents in Burnley were used to further elaborate on respective diagnoses, they were, in particular, marked by a struggle over how they should to be connected to previous incidents in Oldham. The challenge posed by incidents in Burnley and Bradford seemed to require and facilitate explanations that would point to a continuity of events, rather than considering them as singular outbursts with contextual, maybe local, causes. Governmental responses to the unrest in Oldham were still characterized by the attempt to isolate the events and to treat them as exceptional and extraordinary. Tony Blair suggested that Oldham was untypical (see Johnston 2001, Evening News, May 28); Angela Eagle, then a junior Home Office minister, remarked that the incidents in Burnley were "quite different" (Blackman and Disley 2001, The Mirror, June 26) from Oldham. John Denham referred to a "series of individual incidents, apparently unrelated" (Herbert 2001, The Independent, June 26). As more unrest occurred, however, these attempts became more difficult to maintain and, indeed, the reference to overarching causes became significantly more common.

Poverty and economic deprivation were discussed, since the neighbourhoods of Burnley where unrest had broken out in June 2001 were particularly hard-hit by unemployment (see Vasagar 2001, The Guardian, June 30). In relation to right-wing extremist attacks that had preceded – just as in Oldham – the unrest, the impact of BNP mobilizations and

90 The aftermath of Oldham saw the 2001 general election, a second landslide for Labour. Labour's Environment Minister Michael Meacher took the safe seat of Oldham West and Royton. The BNP's Nick Griffin came third and within 524 votes of the Conservative candidate, with an unprecedented 16 per cent of the vote. Michael Treacy, the BNP's candidate in Oldham West and Saddleworth, achieved 11 per cent of the vote (Narain 2001, Daily Mail, June 8; The Sun 2001a, June 8). Nick Griffin remarked that, in his estimation, "multiracial Oldham has irrevocably broken down" (quoted in Jenkins 2001, The Times, June 9).

marches by the National Front was considered. Again, however, commentators regularly took issue with liberal explanations and the consideration of experiences of deprivation, of racial discrimination or racist attacks. The idea that "widespread racial prejudice … gives them [the 'rioters'] the right to behave as badly as you wish and to victimise others" (Alibhai-Brown 2001b, The Independent, June 26) was rejected, though it was unclear who had made the according claim. David Blunkett brought "anti-social behaviour" (cited in Kemp 2001, Press Association, June 27) into the picture and thus presented a framework to explain unrest, notably one that would point to 'thuggery' and suggest strategies of behavioural modification (Flint and Nixon 2006).

In how these explanations were presented, the 'conservative' interpretation of irrational incivility and violent thuggery was increasingly connected to the alleged failure of the multicultural model. Peter Hitchens in *The Mail on Sunday*, put the conservative understanding of incidents in Burnley as follows:

> If there is a threat of bloodshed and disorder on our streets, it is not the result of immigration or the presence of Asian communities in our midst. It is the general decay of good manners and restraint, the decline of order and justice in all our lives, that have brought the firebomb and the riot shield on to these English streets. (Hitchens 2001, The Mail on Sunday, July 1)

The indictment of multiculturalism by Yasmin Alibhai-Brown and others, offered an account that would connect this perspective of moral decline and incivility to alleged failures of minority integration. Burnley was considered as an illustration of the need to reinforce a sense of "shared purpose between the tribes of Britain" (Alibhai-Brown 2001b, The Independent, June 26). The separateness of minority groups was emphasized, and their segregation was increasingly considered to lie at the core of what had caused the violence. It was seen to account for a loss of behavioural control, to the decline of standards of civility, and to the violent thuggery that conservative commentators had seen all along.

Bradford

Earlier in the year, Bradford had already seen some disturbances on a smaller scale. The disorder, however, that unfolded over a few days following Bradford's *World of the City* festival on July 7 completed the three major episodes of unrest in 2001 and would

be analyzed in conjunction with earlier events.[91] Days before the unrest, Tony Blair had announced a 'major study' into widening wealth gaps along ethnic lines, and instructed Downing Street's policy unit to carry out research. This initiative was largely conceived in response to the unfavourable findings of the Labour Market Trends report, which showed, despite the booming economy, widening gaps between rates of unemployment and levels of income. Government sources announced how this initiative was "much, much bigger than Macpherson in its scope and we hope it will set the standard for other countries to follow" (Waugh 2001, The Independent, July 5). This "major inquiry into race" did not re-emerge in the context of the Bradford incidents, where explanations drawing on experiences of deprivation and unemployment remained the exception.

The leftist *Morning Star*, however, did point to "serious economic and social problems [in Bradford that had] largely been ignored by Conservative and Labour governments" (Morning Star 2001, July 9). David Blunkett, by contrast, ridiculed such explanations and referred (in a number of statements) to a torched BMW dealership in Bradford's Manningham area, while suggesting that in "my constituency, they can't afford BMWs" (quoted in The Mirror 2001, Leader, July 9). While a few commentators pointed to inner-city degradation and a general feeling of exclusion and helplessness (e.g., Norman 2001, The Times, July 12), the vast majority of accounts offered explanations of a different type.

Almost timidly, *The Independent* (2001, Comment, July 9) responded to David Blunkett's comments about 'mindless violence':

> Progress has been made towards racial equality in the past two decades, but it has been too slow and a new group is drawing attention to its grievances in a direct and unforgivable manner. Violence cannot be rewarded or tolerated, but it would be foolish not to take its causes seriously.

The Daily Mail, by contrast, supported Blunkett's assessment: "With typical blunt common sense, he yesterday dismissed claims that the rioting which disfigured Bradford at the weekend stemmed from racism" (Daily Mail 2001, July 9). Similarly, Mick Hume in *The Times* rejected explanations that considered right-wing extremist provocations that had occurred in all three localities: "Fingering the far-Right is a way

91 There are considerable differences between the three localities and, in the case of Bradford, most notably the fact that its Asian community is not a minority but a majority in the Manningham area where much of the unrest occurred. For accounts of the unrest in Bradford see Harris (2001) and Herbert and Das-Gupta (2001).

of evading the real problems in places such as Bradford and Oldham" (Hume 2001, The Times, July 9). Labour MP Sion Simon went further to criticize the view of "the liberal establishment … that riots must necessarily be an outpouring of tensions so seethingly underlying that they were always bound eventually to boil over." Rather, blame for the Bradford incidents was to be put squarely on the "the cynical intervention of outsiders", most notably the "Trotskyist Left" (Simon 2001, The Daily Telegraph, July 9).

Marsha Singh, Labour MP for Bradford West, reinforced the explanation of the events as 'anti-social behaviour'. He referred to "yob culture … They take it upon themselves to be the law. … There is a hard core of 200 to 250 criminals who benefit from the sort of scenes witnessed yesterday. They are capable of manipulating and mobilising young people into the sort of behaviour we have seen" (quoted in Rayner 2001, Daily Mail, July 9). Terry Rooney, MP for Bradford North, followed themes established by the Home Secretary: "We need to bear in mind that Saturday was pure wanton, mindless, criminal violence" (quoted in Kallenbach 2001, Daily Telegraph, July 11).

These local reactions were reflected in the governmental response. Blair began speaking of "thuggery" (Stokes and Jones 2001, Daily Telegraph, July 10) and announced, through a spokesperson, that the problem consisted of "local people intent on having a go at the police and destroying their own community" (The Sun 2001b, July 10). David Blunkett launched the call for tougher means of crowd control and involved himself in a debate over the introduction of water cannons and tear-gas (Blunkett: "I'll crush riots!", Kavanagh 2001, The Sun, July 9). The focus on anti-social behaviour or yobbery, however, clearly did not provide particularly plausible answers for why localities such as Burnley, Oldham and Bradford had experienced this unrest.

The concern with ethnic segregation or self-segregation supplemented the analysis of the unrest as evidence of 'thuggishness'.[92] Maybe most conspicuously, the former Scottish National Party MP Jim Sillars drew a link between the Bradford unrest and what "multiculturalism has done in England". Multiculturalism had

92 One argument in this context was to reverse the connections drawn between race and unruly behaviour and to speculate that disorder was a sign of the adaptation of previously law-abiding Asians, as the Independent put it, to "the thuggish values of the host population" (The Independent 2001, Comment, July 9). Another was to blame the failure of the community leaders to restrain young people in their communities (e.g., Roy 2001, The Daily Telegraph, July 9; The Times 2001, Features, July 9).

> drive[n] them [young people of Pakistani background] into their parents' past, and imprison[ed] them in ghettoes. … Forging that common pride, and urging loyalty on the part of all its citizens to its common sets of democratic and legal values is a better prospect for the future than a multiculturalism that has manifestly failed. (Sillars 2001, The Sun, July 10)

It was in a similar context that the findings of a report into the conditions of race relations in Bradford were introduced. The tenor of the report by Herman Ouseley (2001) – considered in more detail below – was seen to be a stark warning about divisions along ethnic lines (Brooke 2001, Daily Mail, July 13; Dodd 2001, The Independent, July 10; Wainwright, Perkins and Travis 2001, The Guardian, July 13). The solution that the report envisaged was the promotion of a sentiment of togetherness, of 'civic pride', across the lines that divided Bradford (Ouseley 2001).

The criminal justice response to the unrest in Bradford was characterized by unprecedented heavy-handedness. More than 200 of those involved in the riot received prison sentences from ten months up to nine years, with the majority of sentences between three and five years (Carling et al. 2004). Faisal Bodi remarked in *The Guardian* that, since the Director of Public Prosecution needed to consent to the riot charge under the 1986 Public Order Act, "there is every reason to suspect that these prosecutions are politically driven" (Bodi 2002, The Guardian, July 1) and that

> [i]n defining the events to which they relate as a criminal rather than a civil problem, the prosecutions demonstrate the government's intention to treat the Muslim community as a law and order problem instead of a community relations/human rights challenge. (ibid.)

John Lea (2004, 196), pointing to the coincidence of blunt law and order responses with a rhetoric of citizenship, responsibility and cohesion, remarked: "Citizenship has to be learned the hard way".

In evaluating some of the explanatory accounts that were applied to all three incidents, we suggest that changes in how causes were discerned and emphasized are evident. The reference to racist provocations preceding the incidents or to socio-economic deprivation to explain the attitudes of those involved in the disturbances appeared less acceptable, while their 'irrationality' or the 'thuggishness' of 'mindless violence' were diagnosed more frequently. The crisis of multiculturalism and how it was seen to have fostered separatism and segregation, were drawn on to consider why the unrest had occurred.

This snapshot of representations of the events shows how accounts were defined that would impact upon the political responses to the disturbances. The terms of this response varied from understandings of disorder in the 1980s. While the Scarman Report or Heseltine's episode in Liverpool had brought about changes in police tactics and large-scale regeneration programmes, the 2001 mainstream emphasised criminality and ethnic segregation. There is a fit between these perspectives and New Labour's social imaginaries that we have outlined previously. The refusal to acknowledge socio-economic conditions or the racist provocations that preceded the unrest chimed with a philosophy of government that was directed at individual conduct and moral outlook.

The Community Cohesion Archive

The post-riot assessment of late 2001 is characterised by some diversity. Reports that were published differ, not only in terms of how much weight was given to varying explanations of what had occurred, but also as regards the depth of their inquiry, the thrust of their critical remarks, and the scope of their recommendations. While the report into the state of race relations in Bradford (Ouseley 2001) had been commissioned prior to the disturbances, the two reports that investigated the situation in Oldham (Ritchie 2001) and Burnley (Clarke 2001) were issued in response to the disorder. Simultaneous to their publication, Whitehall provided its own assessment of the underlying causes and the political initiative they required (Cantle 2001; Denham 2001). In these reports, community cohesion was introduced as a strategic objective. The following briefly considers all five reports: Ouseley, Ritchie and Clarke for how they portray conditions in Bradford, Burnley and Oldham; and Cantle and Denham for their analyses and the development of community cohesion.

Reading these reports allows, as John Lea (2004, 184) puts it, for insights into "museums of official discourse through which the practical working out, and metamorphosis, of dominant political ideologies about the relationship between ethnicity and social stability are revealed". Derek McGhee (2003, 377) has pointed to these reports as the "community cohesion archive", which is mined here for how political strategies were devised in correspondence to understandings of what had caused the unrest.[93]

93 Scarman's (1986) report into the Brixton disturbances of 1981 provided a detailed exploratory narrative of how the incidents unfolded (and was largely commended for this achievement). The

'Community Pride, not Prejudice': Ouseley's report into Bradford

The commissioning of Ouseley's report preceded the Bradford unrest, and it was intended to explore the experience of urban decline and the observation, as stated in the report, of "growing divisions among its population along race, ethnic, religious and social class lines" (Ouseley 2001, 1). It was commissioned not primarily with the intention to arrive at remedies for the aftermath of the unrest and was not intended to be "a firefighter tackling the causes of last weekend's riots" (Wainwright 2001, The Guardian, July 12). In the effort to conceive and analyze the causes of the unrest, however, Ouseley's report was considered most conspicuously for how its findings on growing divisions appeared to confirm critical intuitions about the failure of multiculturalism. More complex aspects of the reasoning of the report were not conspicuously picked up in the immediate news coverage of the unrest.

Regarding the causes of Bradford's decline, the report pointed towards a circle of deprivation, decreasing communal pride, unwillingness to invest in the community, resulting in anti-social behaviour and crime. The report did not clearly privilege any one of these elements as preferred targets of political intervention and, significantly, did not advocate the adoption of urban regeneration programmes. It focused strongly on the city's 'corporate identity', and its 'city pride'. 'City pride', the report suggested, was the attitude that would allow for Bradfordians to positively relate to their environment, and thus to engage, invest and overcome ethnic separations. People, the report claimed, "said that the city pride went when the wealth left the District. From all backgrounds, people want to see civic and community pride at the heart of the economic revival" (Ouseley 2001, 2).[94]

Racism, Ously (2001, 12) suggested, was a fact and characterized the experience of ethnic minorities in Bradford. As importantly as the reality of racist discrimination, however, the report pointed to the reaction of those subjected to discrimination. The

various 2001 reports, by contrast, refused to give much consideration to how the unrest had unfolded and to their respective 'trigger events'.

94 At the time of the publication of the report, civic and city pride had been frequently considered and defined for political purposes such as in a report by Charles Leadbeater (1997) for *Demos*. Ouseley (2001, 12) suggested a "[l]ack of civic pride is reflected in litter-strewn streets". John Burnett (2004, 13) criticized the notion: "To suggest that the Asian communities involved in the northern uprising did not already have a sense of civic pride, did not already care about their children's education, were not already aware of the complexities of identity politics strikes at the very basis of their community identity itself."

attitude of "[s]elf-segregation is driven by fear of others, the need for safety from harassment and violent crime and the belief that it is the only way to promote, retain and protect faith and cultural identity and affiliation" (Ouseley 2001, 10). The report launched a strong attack on 'self-styled' community leaders that were considered to be "in league with the establishment key people and maintain the status quo of control and segregation through fear, ignorance and threats" (Ouseley 2001, 10). Previous city development efforts that were supported by such local leaders had allegedly provided incentives for the portrayal of economic condition in negative terms and thus reinforced "low esteem" (Ouseley 2001, 11). Crime and anti-social behaviour, prevalent among young men "of all cultural backgrounds" (Ouseley 2001, 17), were exacerbated by an overly sensitive police that did "not dare touch them for fear that they would 'riot' and people from all sections of the community resent the police for what they see as 'nothing being done against criminals'" (Ouseley 2001, 11).

The report did not clearly privilege any area of intervention and did not discount the experience of racism and social injustice. However, it put particular emphasis on 'city pride', heightened 'self-esteem' and a 'corporate identity' as solutions for Bradford's most urgent problems. Racism, economic deprivation, segregated lives and crime were considered for how they impacted on 'city pride'. Damaged 'city pride' allowed for an attitude of passivity and non-commitment, which, in turn, exacerbated social problems. Creating a "unifying vision" (Ouseley 2001, 1) was thus the "ultimate aim" in order to "create a District where people are justifiably proud of where they live, learn, work and play" (Ouseley 2001, 2).

To achieve these aims, the report made four proposals in particular. The first was a new approach to citizenship education in Bradford's schools, which was considered "pivotal in developing and sustaining civic knowledge and responsibility among children and young people across all cultural communities" (Ouseley 2001, 28). In terms that mirror the following concerns with cohesion in education, teachers were summoned to create "effective learning environments in which racial differences are seen positively by pupils" (Ouseley 2001, 26). Second, a 'Centre for Diversity, Learning and Living' was to be established to "focus on the people of Bradford, how they can share their diverse experiences and learn with and from each other about how these can contribute to the realization of the Bradford 2020 Vision through working, learning and living together, rather than separately" (Ouseley 2001, 30). Third, the report pointed to the need "to

overcome the difficulties which communities face in mixing, interacting, socializing and moving forward interactively for economic and social benefits". For this purpose, the report demanded heightened "diversity knowledge" (ibid., 33) in the workplace and the introduction of according prerequisites in the Council's recruitment policies. It called for "education programmes that are objective, honest and morally driven [and that] must be focused specifically in order to encourage compliance with pre-determined acceptable behavioural standards" (Ouseley 2001, 32). Fourth, for the private sector the report advocated 'equality and diversity contract conditions' to ensure that "all publicly financed contracts have explicit conditions and criteria in pursuit of equality" (Ouseley 2001, 35). The report thus emphasized behaviour and attitudes – "pre-determined acceptable behavioural standards" that had to be achieved within "behavioural competency frameworks" (Ouseley 2001, 32). The positive corporate identity that Bradford had to achieve was seen to depend, for the most part, on the effort of individual Bradfordians to get their act together.[95]

Reports on Oldham and Burnley

The Ritchie Report (2001) into the Oldham disorder was published in December 2001, simultaneously to the results of a series of other inquires into the Northern unrest. Commissioned to "consider the underlying causes and problems of tension between the communities in Oldham", it was led by David Ritchie, a retired civil servant.

The report followed an established formula and lamented the unwillingness of people "to shape up to their own responsibilities, beginning with their own attitudes" (Ritchie 2001, 4). Equally, however, Oldham Council and the police were accused of failing to promote racial equality and in particular the Council was scolded for having failed to develop "bi-partisan approaches to key policy issues [and for its] persistent failure to face up to the deep seated issues of segregation" (Ritchie 2001, 14). Similar to

95 Despite a widely positive reception of the report, there have been various critical responses. Margaret Eaton, the Tory leader of Bradford Council (and chairwoman of Bradford 2020 Vision, the partnership that commissioned the report), suggested that the recommendations amounted to "another experiment in racial engineering and some form of Maoist cultural re-education" (quoted in Sutcliffe 2001, The Evening Telegraph, July 29). From a different standpoint, the New Statesman rejected the report: "White politicians and black or Asian race relations 'experts' babble endless nonsense. They talk of the need for black judges, black chief constables, black generals and other 'role models'. Nobody on the streets of Bradford or Burnley could give a toss. Westminster deals in symbols and soundbites; the young Asians of Manningham deal in realities. They would trade any number of Mr Blunkett's adventure playgrounds and Lord Ouseley's centres of diversity for the prospect of decent jobs" (New Statesman 2001, July 16).

Ouseley's report, the report pointed to the "lack of opportunity for people to meet and talk across the community divides" (Ritchie 2001, 4).

The Ritchie report identified a number of issues, ranging from education, health, and the economy to leisure, culture and the media and offered some recommendations (Ritchie 2001, 10-15). It was met by an unwelcoming response from local officials who seemed to use available avenues to deflect its critical comments. The comparatively low-key background of the members of the review panel, and Ritchie himself, seemed to allow for the recommendations to be openly rejected.[96]

Simultaneously, the Burnley Task Force issued its report into the unrest (Clarke 2001). Chaired by Lord Anthony Clarke of Hampstead, a former chair of Labour's National Executive Committee, the Task Force commanded more authority than its Oldham counterpart. As in other inquires, its terms were to report "not just the immediate causes of these problems" (Clarke 2001, 5), but also the "deep-rooted issues that have led Burnley to the point where violence and prejudice was allowed to dominate the town for those days in June" (ibid.). In its assessment of the unrest, the report concurred with the version presented by Burnley Police and suggested that

> the disorder was started as a result of a disagreement between criminal elements in both white and Asian communities … Although repeated comments were received that suggested that drug dealers and their associates were involved at the start of the disturbances, people were reluctant to give names of those involved (Clarke 2001, 36).[97]

96 Oldham Council rejected the report for its "lack of academic rigour and flawed methodology" and for how it had relied "on the views of those self-selected few who sought the opportunity to express their views" (quoted in Carter 2002, The Guardian, June 29). Although they could have been subject to similar criticisms, such objections were not levelled against Ouseley's and Clarke's reports. Controversially, Ritchie had advocated an urban regeneration programme "with the explicit aim of achieving racially mixed schemes of private and socially rented housing" (Ritchie 2001, 10). The Council responded that "Oldham is presented as a uniquely segregated society with a clear implication that the nature and extent of that segregation is a major cause for concern and underlies many of the social and economic ills, which the town faces. The Report draws one to the conclusion that the events of last May were a direct consequence of a segregated society. We doubt this analysis" (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police 2002, 5). Rather than engaging in "social engineering" (the council's interim response quoted in Herbert 2002, The Independent, June 29), the Council referred to the "belief that cohesion can only come about through people freely choosing to increase mutual understanding, interaction, and participation in the life of the Borough" (Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council and Greater Manchester Police 2002, 12).

97 The Task Force did not consider a racist attack on a taxi driver as among the immediate causes of the unrest, whereas it strongly emphasized previous fighting among Asian youths. It remains unclear how this alleged intra-communal fighting, as seems to be suggested, could have lead to wide-spread confrontations with the police. The suggestion that the unrest in Burnley had been connected to drug criminality, though it was not plausibly corroborated in the report, was widely

The report quoted Blair's 2001 Labour conference address:

> The graffiti, the vandalism, the burnt out cars, the street corner drug dealers, the teenage mugger just graduating from the minor school of crime: we're not old fashioned or right-wing to take action against this social menace. We're standing up for the people we represent, who play by the rules and have a right to expect others to do the same. (Blair quoted in Clarke 2001, 6)

In line with Blair, the Task Force's report expressed strong indignation not only with 'thugs' but with those elements that did not live up to "responsibilities". Similar to previous reports, it propagated a "common vision" (Clarke 2001, 5). While its diagnosis of deprivation in Burnley seemed fairly frank, its remedies were focused on measures of local self-help to overcome urban decline (Clarke 2001, para. 3.10). The problem of segregation was mostly addressed as one of self-segregation: "The Task Force believes that if Asian communities want to progress then they must be open and honest about the failings of their own communities" (Clarke 2001, 50).

In the report, warnings about decline and disintegration coincided with a positive appeal in an interesting way. Clarke professed to having "fallen in love with the town", a "town of rich tradition and pride", inhabited by people that "display the best elements of human nature" (Clarke 2001, 5). A few pages further, a fascinating reversal towards expressions of profound indignation occurred, significantly not just with 'thugs' but with wider attitudes: "if Asian communities want to progress then they must be open and honest about the failings of their own communities" (Clarke 2001, para. 3.4). This reversal seems exemplary of the simultaneity of praise and exhortation that is conspicuous in all three reports investigated here. Flawed realities are contrasted with potentials that could be realized if the concerned groups changed their ways and pulled themselves together.

The 'Bradford Race Review' focused on the idea of 'civic pride' to counter urban decline and inter-ethnic discord. The 'Oldham Independent Review' was remarkable for how quickly it was rejected by its commissioning authorities. Clarke's 'Independent Task Force' offered a mixture of law and order rhetoric with an emphasis on local self-help, perhaps most closely approximating the way community cohesion would be introduced and defined in the following. All reports made recommendations of 'civic pride', 'visions', and 'corporate identity'. The development of a 'sense of belonging'

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picked up in speculations on how all unrest had been related to drugs (such as in Denham 2001, para. 1.7).

and of a positive identification with the city were presented as appropriate responses to the unrest.

Cantle: From Analysis to Political Practice

While the previous three reports were all conceived with particular local contexts in mind, the attention soon shifted towards the broader national picture. Already in the reports, as well as in media coverage of unrest, there had been a tendency to move from local to national diagnosis, to search for shared features underpinning the local dislocations, and to shift from local analyses to diagnoses that were generalisable. In this regard, 'Community cohesion', the report of the Independent Review Team (Cantle 2001) chaired by Ted Cantle, and 'Building Cohesive Communities' the report of the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion (Denham 2001) followed established trends.

The Independent Review Team chaired by Ted Cantle, besides delivering a set of 67 policy recommendations, began referring to "a field of community cohesion" (Cantle 2001, para. 1.1). It established the notion for public policy use and suggested that governmental and civil society actors should adopt the concept and that "each area should now develop a Community Cohesion Strategy" (2001, para. 5.2.3). The report's terms of reference did not envisage an extended investigation into the unrest, but rather a consideration of the "views of local communities", to "identify good practice" and "weaknesses in the handling of ... issues at the local level" (2001, para. 1.1).

In addition to its consideration of the three localities affected by violence, the review team visited Birmingham, Southall and Leicester. Particularly the latter two were used to draw contrasts. In Southall and Leicester, "there was a pride in their community", "diversity was seen as a positive thing", and an attitude of "openness and honesty meant that rumours and misunderstandings were less likely to gain credence and ferment resentment or jealousy" (2001, para. 4.3). While the report acknowledged that where "high levels of poverty and unemployment were found community cohesion was unlikely to be very evident" (2001, para. 4.5), it argued that the connection between poverty and unrest was not "straightforward" (2001, para. 4.12).

In its first set of recommendations, the report claimed that "community cohesion fundamentally depends on people and their values. Indeed, many of the present

problems seem to owe a great deal to the failure to communicate and agree a set of clear values that can govern behaviour" (2001, para. 5.1.1). Strong emphasis was placed on the need to establish more clearly the "rights – and in particular – the responsibilities of citizenship" (2001, 20). The report's headline recommendation was the introduction of a "statement of allegiance" that would have to precede the acquisition of citizenship in British naturalisation procedures, followed by the demand for a "national debate"—which would lead to the adoption of "principles of a new citizenship" (2001, para. 2.15). While the report offered some recommendations on "community leadership" (2001, para. 5.2) and suggested that political parties needed to become more representative of the diversity in Britain (2001, para. 5.3), its recommendations on issues of economic inequality remained localized (2001, para. 5.5). Regarding employment, for example, the near-exclusive concern was with the acquisition of skills, rather than with structural causes of long-term unemployment (2001, para. 5.13).

The "physical segregation" of communities was mentioned prominently as part of the list of factors that were considered to have caused the unrest.

> The complete separation of communities based on religion, education, housing, culture, employment etc., will, however mean that the lack of contact with, and absence of knowledge about, each other's communities will lead to the growth of fear and conflict. The more levels upon which a community is divided, the more necessary and extensive will be the need to foster understanding and acceptance of diversity. (2001, para. 5.7.3)

Divisions of a 'community' may thus be overcome by what Ouseley's report had already referred to as 'diversity knowledge', the recognition and acceptance of values and a change in attitudes.

The terms of reference limited the focus of the Cantle report to a consideration of communal tensions. Accordingly, structural solutions to problems on a wider scale, such as an interest in deprivation or inequality, were largely absent. This may not surprise, since such perspectives had already been rejected in the understandings of the unrest that prominent governmental actors had proposed. Moreover, even though the report did not explicitly engage with multiculturalism, it followed the account that ethnic segregation had fostered communal divisions, which, in turn, had given rise to significant social problems.

The report also introduced some elements of a definition of the term 'community cohesion'. In its appendix, it offered a sketch drawn up by Rosalyn Lynch (2001) of the Home Office's Research Development and Statistics Unit. Lynch suggested that "[c]ommunity cohesion […] is about helping micro-communities to gel or mesh into an integrated whole" (Lynch 2001, 70). With reference to a Canadian definition, Lynch stressed the procedural character of cohesion as an objective that required continuous efforts (2001, 69). The bulk of the sketch, however, approached 'community cohesion' by identifying the factors standing in its way: residential and educational segregation, racism, competition for scarce resources among ethnic groups, misinformation and fear spread by the media. Citizenship education, diversity in housing and education were introduced as having a positive impact on community cohesion. This brief and arguably somewhat eclectic analysis in the report attempted to give some lineage to a policy idea that had been identified, arguably, before the report was written. It was intended to convey some semblance of scientific rigour, such as when it claimed, misleadingly, that "a great deal has been written about community cohesion" (2001, 70).

Denham: Cohesion and Public Order

The report 'Building Cohesive Communities' that was issued by the Ministerial Group on Public Order and Community Cohesion carried forward this definition of the paradigm. The Denham Report offered no new assessment of the unrest but provided a summary of the previous reports and offered an overview of the perspective of government.[98] Significantly, it established a governmental commitment to community cohesion, as an objective that would be mainstreamed across public policy sectors. It suggested, however, that 'government'

> cannot create or impose community cohesion. It is something that communities must do themselves with Government's help as enabler and supporter. The Actions we set out in the previous Chapter should be viewed in that light. They will only succeed in making a real difference if communities are fully engaged in, and take responsibility for, the task of civic renewal. (Denham 2001, para. 4.1)

98 When David Blunkett announced the establishment of the Ministerial Group in the House of Commons, he pointed to the need for an "urgent review … of all the relevant community issues" and to the task of the Group to "seek views from people on the ground in areas which have suffered from violence the most, as well as in other places with similar social and demographic features which have not" (Hansard, 10 July 2001, Column 664).

While Denham's report contained some new recommendations, it operated mostly against the backdrop of pre-existing governmental programmes whose efforts, it was suggested, needed to be altered to accommodate 'community cohesion'. The report emphasised, among other areas, a focus on 'shared values' and identities: "A uniting identity can have a powerful effect in shaping attitudes and behaviour which are conducive to community cohesion" (2001, para. 3.10). It paid tribute to the role of 'civic pride' in reducing communal tensions (2001, para. 3.14). It concurred with the Cantle Report by calling for the incorporation of 'community cohesion' as an "explicit aim of Government" (2001, para. 3.16), though it acknowledged the need "to establish how community cohesion might be measured" (2001, 3.17). It put emphasis on education (2001, para. 3.29-32), housing issues (2001, para. 3.22-28), and 'community leadership' (2001, para. 3.33). Regarding policing, it highlighted the interrelation between anti-social behaviour and cohesiveness, and envisaged strengthening consultation procedures between police and communities (2001, para. 3.67-76).

The report pointed out how various existing governmental efforts could relate to cohesion as a strategic policy goal, and it highlighted the need to incorporate 'community cohesion' as a strategic objective. This objective was defined against the background of a settled understanding of what had led to the unrest, disruptions in the local social fabric which, in turn, were seen to have behavioural causes or to be related to defects in identity or values. It suggested that "it will require courage in tackling the intrinsically difficult and controversial issue of social identities and values on which cohesion depends" (2001, para. 4.2). In the Denham report as well as in preceding documents, this task was largely conceived in relation to the creation of unifying city or national identities, framed in terms similar to the corporate identities that businesses or institutions often intend to create in order to infuse a positive ethos of work. The role of actually existing identifications among ethno-religious minorities was less frequently and more carefully broached (until the work of the *Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion*).

Government, the report suggested, cannot be entrusted with the creation of community cohesion. Where it has a role to play, it is to remind communities of their shortcomings. It can facilitate the dissemination of good practices, persuade recalcitrant local actors to get into the community cohesion business and evaluate local efforts. As a new paradigm of British urban governance, community cohesion envisages continuous efforts by post-

immigration groups to reconsider identities, to ‘shape up’ and to become active in order to comply with requirements that are ambiguous at best.

How these priorities were put into practice is not easy to establish. With the requirement to mainstream cohesion, with funding dispersed to projects that made reference to cohesion, and with the 2006 introduction of a statutory duty to promote cohesion in state-maintained schools, the notion clearly became widely used. Its effectiveness and the extent to which its rhetorical pervasiveness was met by practices that would have been developed differently had priorities been otherwise is unclear. There is some evidence to suggest that the new orientation supported a shift from anti-racist priorities towards an emphasis on social ties and cross-communal networking (Thomas 2007). There is even more evidence of ambiguity, such as in the area of education. While 95% of English schools indicated an awareness of their duty to promote cohesion, understandings of what this duty entailed vary considerably and the list of terms associated with ‘community cohesion’ – from citizenship, multiculturalism, faith, tradition, age or deprivation – confirms a considerable scope for interpretation (Phillips, Tse and Johnson 2010, 29). Despite this scope, it is clear that some items remained excluded. Community cohesion largely suggests a focus on behavioural remedies, instead of a concern with socio-structural conditions or with the experience of racial or religious discrimination.

The Report of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion

After the attack on London Transport in 2005, reinforced priorities in the area of domestic security put some doubt on the delivery of community cohesion (Kundnani 2009). The *Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion* (CICC) was introduced as an attempt to update scope and meaning of the concept and to develop the agenda further in response to new concerns. Introduced as a “new and honest” (BBC 2006) effort to consider ethno-religious diversity in Britain, its launch was accompanied by repeated hints towards the failure of multiculturalism. Announcing the establishment of the commission, Communities Minister Ruth Kelly (cited in Chapman 2006) remarked that in “our attempt to avoid imposing a single British identity and culture, have we ended up with some communities living in isolation of each other, with no common bonds between them”. “[F]rom a period of near uniform consensus on the value of multiculturalism”, the new debates had to consider whether multiculturalism

was "encouraging separateness" (ibid.). The "near uniform consensus" on multiculturalism had, of course, already been questioned for a considerable amount of time, such as when the causes of the 2001 unrest had been debated. In this case, the emphasis on identities seemed to indicate that the Commission was expected to deliver new perspectives in the definition of community cohesion.

To a considerable extent, the CICC report struck a similar tone to earlier reports. Community cohesion was defined as "the process that must happen in all communities to ensure different groups of people get on well together" (CICC 2007, 9). A focus on communal relationships, social capital and behavioural characteristics remained evident.[99] One characteristic, however, that distinguished the report from earlier definitions of community cohesion was a certain localism and the reference to the complexity of social conditions that would make national solutions more difficult to apply. A further development in the report was a new emphasis on what constituted the core obstacles towards the attainment of community cohesion. The report did not put strong emphasis on social patterns of segregation or the behavioural trends underpinning 'self-segregation'. It pointed to identity patterns among ethnic minority groups.

The foreword by Dara Singh, chief executive of Ealing Council, introduced the purpose of the report as to consider "shared futures", rather than "obsessing with those things that make us different" (CICC 2007, 3). Integration and cohesion, it is stated, are "not about race, faith or other forms of group status or identity" (CICC 2007, 5). By contrast, the report suggested that

> identities remain, but increasingly, people are moving away from single identities to multiple identities not just based on race or ethnicity, but differences in values, differences in life-styles, consumption, social class, differences across generations, gender etc. People now have multiple identities and adjust these to the situation they are in – and this seems particularly true for the children or grandchildren of migrants. (CICC 2007, 34)

99 A difference between CICC (2007, 97) and, for example, the Cantle Report was the new emphasis on the promotion of 'social justice'. This was not conspicuously picked up in the governmental response to the Commission's report, where the concern remained unacknowledged and unconnected to the revised definition of cohesion (Department for Communities and Local Government 2008). Overall, the concern to promote social justice appears rather limited: the emphasis is on media representations and communication strategies – showing that "justice was being done" in order for cohesion to be preserved (CICC 2007, 100-107).

Fluid and trans-nationally globalized identities were the basis for suggestions in the report. It prominently mentioned research findings showing that "people with more complex and multiple sources of identity are more positive about other groups, more integrated and less prejudiced" (CICC 2007, 35). These emerging dispositions were contrasted with older, traditional or conventional ethno-religious identities that seemed to be considered not simply as problematic but also as in decline. The report strongly implied that these were problematic and, given globalization and new urban diversity, historically anachronistic types of identification. While it is not always very clear how this emphasis on new identities informed the political recommendations of the report, it is evident that aspects of the politics it envisaged emerged on the basis of this diagnosis.[100]

The analyses in the report have not been undisputed. While new constellations of diversity are undoubtedly significant, it has been suggested that this picture may be incomplete. Demographic differentiation in one urban sphere, where "super diversity" (Vertovec 2007) is seen to have emerged, does not change that significant numbers of people, and in particular those who are less visible or interesting as specimen of 'old' kinds of diversity, continue to subscribe to group identities. The *Fourth Survey*, a large quantitative study of identity patterns among British ethnic minorities, established the remaining significance of religious identities among British Asians (Modood, Berthoud and Lakey 1997). Shared experiences of diasporic life continue to shape identities, not least in relation to religion, for groups that are ready to mobilize around grievances and common claims and in particular when shared value commitments are seen to be under attack (Modood 2005). In critical comments on the Commission's emphasis on "multiple, fluid, diasporic, transnational and hybrid identities" Derek McGhee (2008, 57) suggests that these "are lived in particular socio-political contexts" and do not "prevent the persistence of individuals also occupying multiple positions of marginalization and subordination" (2008, 58).

The experience of discrimination, such as for being Muslim or African Caribbean, means that fluid identities may be experienced as socio-structurally ossified. The

100 The report's rejection of 'single group funding' is probably the closest approximation to a political recommendation that corresponds to such understandings (CICC 2007, Annex D). Government dedicated £50 million to implement the report's recommendations, though it is difficult, as in most of these cases, to establish the extent to which CICC proved influential in shaping governmental priorities. See Fortier (2010) for a discussion of the aftermath of the CICC report, which is beyond the scope of this investigation.

suggestion is that this experience continues to characterise at least aspects of the lives of post-immigration groups in Britain. Arguably, however, not merely the experience of structural constraints accounts for why certain ethno-religious identity positions remain salient for individuals within these groups. *Positive* conceptions of group- or faith-based identity markers continue to characterise how British ethnic minorities conceive of themselves and of their social position. 'Super diversity' or the emergence of hybrid or trans-national identities in one domain of British life do not discount other, maybe more consolidated and less differentiated group positions (Modood and Dobbernack 2011). Hence, Lentin and Titley (2011, 186) have rightly suggested that the CICC report is at risk of failing to recognize "how people have long struggled to carve out these spaces [for identities] and possibilities themselves". The position of the report, which Lentin and Titley characterize as that of *diversity*, is formulated in a way that it "acts on the individual as a counterbalance to the dangers of community. … The language of freedom as practice has been inhabited by diversity as a form of governmentality, nudging conduct and self-management towards desired effects" (ibid.). While it is difficult to gauge such effects, it is clear that the report is guilty of a measure of sociological reductionism and of a wishful projection of desirable identity patterns. The fit of these patterns to the variety of ways in which post-immigration groups in Britain conceive of themselves in religious or cultural terms – or outside of groups as individuals with trans-national attachments – is not established in the report. It appears to disregard processes of self-definition as well as negative ascriptions and structural pressures that mean that ethno-religious identities remain socially significant.

As this position is not just reflected in the work of Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion, it may be appropriate to consider its origins in some more detail. One of the intellectual figureheads of CICC was Michael Keith, now the Director of the *COMPAS* Centre at the University of Oxford, whose work is instructive in this regard. In his concern to defend the report, Keith pointed to how

> networks, movements and cultures which cross borders now create sentimental communities of identity whose spatial scales are distinct from ground based realities. New forms of conviviality are coming into being that cross the conventional racial boundaries that characterise some parts of today's city. The spaces of old and reproducing articulations of bigotry and racism remain. But they may be becoming residual as they are by-passed. Contemporary calls for new forms of transnational co-operation and a supra-national conversations (sic) about poverty or climate change are hardly radical. (Keith 2007)

Keith points to the complexity of contemporary city-life and how this challenges identity-based categories that fail to respond: "ethnic specificity and cultural difference are invariably on the move" (Keith 2005, 5). Keith, however, remains at risk of eliding the fact that, although his analyses may seem appropriate for the domain of social life that he describes, there are other patterns of identification and sensibilities at work in other domains, in different social contexts or even within the same contexts but outside of his area of interest. Religious and group-based identifications remain, as Modood (2007) and others have convincingly argued. The exclusive concern with 'the novel' represents a risk of eliding 'the old' and of introducing a hierarchy of identifications. This conception appears to draw on a notion of progress that is unhelpful in this regard. Following this notion, ethno-religious identities are not complemented, but replaced by the trans-national sensibilities that Keith observes. Accordingly, a binary antagonism between two types of identities is seen to be at work. John Solomos and Les Back point to how in the literature on cultural politics and ethnic minorities in Britain, this antagonism has become a commonplace. The

> debate can be summarized as a choice between *either* embracing the complex multiple formation of itinerant culture produced through movement and passage; *or* the assertion of arborescent traditions that in one way or another rely upon the simplicity of racial and cultural essences. (1996, 155, emphases added)

In earlier writings, Keith himself had pointed to the danger of binary opposition and of a simplistic 'either-or' and had remarked, with Pile (1993b, 33), that "in defining new ethnicities, there is clearly potential for the texts to signify a rejection of 'old' ethnicities". Notwithstanding, this signification is evident in the CICC report for how it not just ignores ethno-religious and group identities, but suggests that these are potentially harmful and dangerous.[101]

While it is difficult, in particular after Labour's recent electoral defeat, to estimate the remaining significance of the CICC report, its selective recollection of cultural diversity

101 This shortcoming of CICC, to some extent, mirrors particular developments in British cultural theory, where the interest in hybrid identities frequently coincides with a rejection of ethnic or religious types of identification (Gilroy 2000; Alexander 2002). In the cultural politics tradition, however, the insightful and nuanced work of Stuart Hall stands out as an attempt to point to new dynamics of identification without stigmatising those that do not conform. Hall (2000, 227), for example, suggests that while "[s]ome individuals remain deeply committed to traditional practices and values (though rarely without a diasporic inflection) others, so-called traditional identifications have been transformed by being intensified (e.g by hostility from the 'host' community, racism, or by changing world conditions, such as the rising salience of Islam). For others, still, hybridization is far advanced, but rarely in any assimilationst sense." Hall points to a broader range of identity positions that he sees at work in contemporary Britain and that cannot be reduced the generalized transnational fluidity that is postulated by CICC.

in Britain is reminiscent of arguments that continue to inform public debate. In one such argument, *diversity* is pitted against *multiculturalism*: the former represents an acceptable flavour of cosmopolitan difference; the latter refers to unwanted religious identities, group-based claims, and – more than anything else – a problematisation of British Muslims. David Cameron's (2011) recent juxtaposition of the failure of the "doctrine of state multiculturalism" is exemplary of similarly selective dealings with 'difference': embracing one and disavowing the other. The exclusive concern with desirable 'diversity', 'transnational sensibilities', with the urban melange of hybrid identities in both academic and political discourse, allows evading the difficult and protracted questions that arise when claims are made from group-based positions (Modood forthcoming). If the sociological or political interest in the former means rejecting the latter as abnormal or outdated, or if a biased sociological diagnosis might inform the design of public policies that systematically disadvantage ethno-religious groups, there are good reasons for sustained critique.

It may seem unclear how these critical comments correspond to our objective to examine logics of social activation. However, the urban spatiality that Keith outlines and that is evident, as a result of his contribution, in the CICC report is reminiscent of the construction of the 'projective city' – a city of flux, temporary networks and changing connections. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello (2005a, 105), whose work we have examined in Chapter 2, suggest that this city contains "flows, where nothing could be stabilized, accumulated or crystallized". This social imaginary underpins "[n]ew maxims of success … to discriminate between behaviour that is satisfactory and behaviour that leads to exclusion; to put a value on qualities and attitudes that had not hitherto been identified as distinctive" (ibid.).

The types of activities that were envisaged in community cohesion strategies – mixing, mingling, flexibility, and tolerance – are clearly not alien to British post-immigration groups, not even where there is a remaining significance of religious or ethnic identities. The diagnosis that their behavioural change will safeguard cohesion and address significant social problems is dubious at best. Self-segregation, we have previously suggested, is a highly problematic diagnosis. However, while earlier community cohesion strategies seemed to be based on a misreading of social realities, the CICC extends this misreading into the problematic territory of identities. While earlier reports suggested a change of behaviour, the CICC seems to ask for new kinds of

identifications. It shows a preference for trans-national, fluid and hybrid sensibilities, and it attempts to show that these are more desirable and conducive to community cohesion.

Conclusion

The chapter has discussed how Labour's new social rhetoric, its emphasis on social morals and the reference to social fragmentation provided a background for the analysis of disorder in 2001. This background informed the understanding that a lack of contact between majority and ethnic minorities provided the most compelling explanation for social problems in urban Britain, and that this lack was largely the result of behavioural deficiencies among ethnic minorities. The interpretation of disorder in Britain is usually marked by squabbles between liberal and conservative perspectives. Community cohesion was not least successfully introduced as it attached itself to the mainstream conservative reading and drew the connection to diagnoses of self-segregation and to the perception of a crisis of multiculturalism. More generally, the turn towards community cohesion signalled a new emphasis on attitudes among post-immigration groups. When community cohesion was defined and developed in the 2001 context, it involved a new assessment of how significant problems in English localities resulted from deficient behaviour and how such deficiencies could be overcome by a new communal vibrancy, civic pride, heightened responsibility and, generally, new degrees of social and communal activity.

The chapter has suggested that, for how it involves a behaviouralisation of social problems, community cohesion has changed the terms of debate on cultural diversity. The question that is being asked with community cohesion, John Lea (2004, 193) suggests, is "how have the socially excluded communities – poor whites and Asians – got into this mess, and what can be done – in particular what can they do – to restore their 'community cohesion?". Accordingly, "[r]esponsibility for social change [has been put towards] individuals and communities rather than the state" (Alexander 2007, 120). The scenario in which 'community cohesion', 'civic pride' or a heightened 'sense of belonging' stimulate economic regeneration or make racism disappear, however, relies on a crude model of human behaviour, understood as something that "can be neatly packaged and dispensed if the right conditions are met for [its] production" (Fortier 2010, 19).

With a discussion of the post-riot analysis, the chapter has also provided a snapshot of how alternative priorities became irrelevant, as they were brushed off as implausible or subsumed into the analytical perspective of community cohesion. The request to shape up, to become active, self-reliant and responsible works within a framework of expectations where activity and responsibility have replaced concerns with structural inequality and racism. Clearly, inequality and racism are still being considered by exponents of the community cohesion agenda, but their role is distinct from how they informed previous political objectives. Ted Cantle, for example, suggests that that "community cohesion and equality are two sides of the same coin. One is unachievable without the other. Even the *perception* of ambiguity is unhelpful and likely to be counterproductive" (iCoCo 2006, para. 3.1 g, 17). The CICC (2007, 100-107) report suggests that for community cohesion to be achieved, social justice needs to be *seen* being done. It is the *perception* of racism or inequality that endangers cohesion. Following this new concern with perceptions, community cohesion has been introduced as a fragile construct that is predicated on sentiments and attitudes that are easily corrupted and that require constant promotion. Critical analysis might damage this strategic objective and prevent the behavioural change that community cohesion, as a "regenerative tonic" (Amin 2005, 614), envisages.[102]

102 The extent of such rhetorical operations can be seen in an exchange between Cantle and Faisal Bodi in *The Guardian*. Responding to Bodi's critique of Cantle's agenda (Bodi 2006, The Guardian, June 7), Cantle expressed disappointment over this "attack on community cohesion" (Cantle 2006, The Guardian, June 9). Similarly, in response to earlier criticism by Bodi (2002), Oldham Councillor Jeremy Sutcliffe asked: "Does he not want to live in a cohesive society?" (The Guardian 2002, July 2). The suggestion seems to be that community cohesion is not merely a strategic policy objective; it is seen to have a rhetorical reality that makes critical engagement with the term undesirable and harmful.

Conclusion

Considering the formation of three agendas of cohesion, the thesis has explored the claim that the inactivity of populations causes social problems and puts social cohesion at risk. It has not primarily questioned the plausibility or truthfulness of this suggestion. Instead, it has focused on how it has been articulated, and what remedies it entails. The examination of three agendas of cohesion could not, and was not intended to, identify constants. The aim was to consider different types of concern that became politically salient and to identify similarities as well as differences. The initiatives examined here were developed in distinct political and discursive environments. Depending on the respective context, different understandings of social problems and crises circulated and were captured in propositions about what constitutes or promotes the 'cohesive society'.

On the basis of empirical analyses of the formation of social cohesion agendas in France, Germany and Britain, the thesis has provided an account of how despite context-dependent particularities, the politics of cohesion in all three countries called for measures of social activation. In other words, different accounts of what constitutes the 'cohesive society' entailed similar measures for promoting it. This puzzling observation has been the starting point for an investigation of how the concern for social integration – clearly an established governmental aim – gave rise to a new interest in dispositions and behaviour. The intention was to provide some of the groundwork that is needed to understand how the objective of social cohesion was linked to the strategy of social activation. The thesis has identified aspects of the political logic of social cohesion, summarily presented in Table 4, and how social imaginaries of cohesion correspond to remedies of social activation. In investigations of agenda-setting moments and of the rhetoric of prominent politicians, the thesis has examined three different political initiatives. This conclusion draws on insights from all three cases and revisits analytical concerns introduced in the first chapters.

Dimensions of cohesion

The thesis has sought to critically engage with and to advance the analysis of a noteworthy political phenomenon. Despite its conspicuousness, the emergence of concerns with social cohesion across European polities has to date received little systematic or critical attention. Where it has been examined, the political objective of cohesion has often been presented as a natural response to challenging social realities.

Critical analyses have largely been restricted to individual policy fields. Nonetheless, analyses of cohesion discourse within particular domains of concern, such as welfare reform, minority integration or political participation, have shed light on some of its suppositions. Some of the critical accounts of community cohesion, *cohésion sociale* or *Bürgergesellschaft* that we have drawn on in preceding chapters are of considerable merit.

Table 4: Dimensions of the politics of cohesion

	Scenario of disintegration	**Vision of cohesion**	**Social activity**	**Targets of activation**
Cohésion Sociale	*Exclusion sociale*	'Humane' society	Compassion; proximity; 'humane' concern	*Les exclus*: either 'all French' or socially marginalized
Community Cohesion	Ethnic (self-) segregation; parallel lives	Shared lives; vibrant communities	Contact; mixing and mingling; tolerance and civility	Ethno-religious minorities; Muslims in particular
Bürgergesellschaft	Apathetic citizenry; social sclerosis	Self-reliance; active citizenship	Economic, civic and social participation and self-reliance	The irresponsible, oversaturated collective

The thesis aimed to contribute to such investigations by considering deployments of cohesion for their linguistic strategies, imaginary qualities and effects across fields of issues. The politics of cohesion, it has been argued here, projects a vision of society and concludes that social problems need to be countered with political prescriptions towards heightened activity. To explore such connections, the thesis has examined how notions of cohesion have been introduced and developed in debates about post-immigration groups in Britain, citizenship and social reform in Germany and the welfare state in France. It has paid particular attention, firstly, to the formative stages of agendas of cohesion; secondly, to how notions of social disintegration and, thirdly, unity were articulated; and, fourthly, to the turn towards activity that is characteristic of the politics of cohesion. The following recapitulates these dimensions alongside analytical and critical concerns that were introduced in the first two chapters.

The beginnings of cohesion

The three agendas of social cohesion examined here all emerged around critical junctures. They were developed in the context of governmental initiatives that put forward new propositions regarding the condition of society, its problems and trajectories. The politics of cohesion, however, does not just respond. Its introduction was accompanied by propositions on how crises and their causes should be understood.[103] Many of these understandings were pre-existing and well-established. As Lentin and Titley (2011) have recently argued in considerable detail, British multiculturalism has been defined as in perpetual crisis (see also Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Its crisis mirrors that of the welfare state whose allegedly overbearing and immobilizing nature was treated as a rhetorical commonplace when *Bürgergesellschaft* became a significant idea in German political debate. *Fracture sociale* offered a particular understanding of the crisis of social exclusion, a crisis that had been acknowledged across the spectrum of French politics in the 1980s and 90s.

Such invocations of crisis are characteristic of the beginnings of cohesion. They distinguish the interpretation of events and social processes in all three cases. Despite their dissimilarities, *exclusion sociale*, disorder in the English North, and German social sclerosis were portrayed as critical moments that required a new consideration of the terms of social integration and new public policy activity. Social imaginaries were marketed in response to such crises, and society became a site for inventive and strategic work. Much of this, as was suggested in Chapter 1, can usefully be understood as the construction of problem images that attribute "cause, blame, and responsibility" (Stone 1989, 282). There are tangible benefits in the creation of such images. Notions of social cohesion were introduced in environments where political actors competed for advantageous positions and rhetorical openings to define political objectives and outmanoeuvre opponents. The emergence of cohesion in all three cases is characterised by such strategic calculations.

103 There is a distinction between invocations of crises and the protracted conflicts that characterize the social negotiation of cultural diversity, welfare politics or political participation. Reinhart Koselleck (1989, 311) usefully suggests that "[s]ocial relations, conflicts and their resolutions and their changing presuppositions are never congruent with the linguistic articulations by virtue of which societies act, conceive of themselves, interpret, change and form anew." The reality of social processes and political contestations that are conceived as critical, Koselleck (1973) suggests, emerges as a result of intellectual work.

Jacques Chirac proclaimed a *fracture sociale* in 1994/5 in order to define a platform for his presidential campaign that was distinct from those of the other candidates. *Fracture sociale* offered a novel interpretation of a crisis whose elements had been widely acknowledged. This crisis, the occurrence of *exclusion sociale*, had been the subject of various interpretations. Among those, the Socialists' concern with material social problems captured only insufficiently a diagnostic dimension that Chirac would supply, the humane touch. The concern with the moral and psychological dispositions of the French population allowed for the drawing of a contrast between Chirac's position and the priorities of his opponents, which were portrayed as technocratic and inhumane.

In the early 1990s, Tony Blair's discovery of a moral crisis offered tangible strategic benefits, regardless of whether it was supported by deep-seated beliefs or not. Conservative preoccupations with moral decline, immoral behaviour and crime were drawn upon and reinterpreted. New Labour put forward an explanation for various problems that mobilized conservatism against the Conservatives and pointed to the amoralism of the Thatcher years as a root cause of social pathologies. It is indicative of the strategic nature of this positioning that Tony Blair himself noted how "effectively" he had managed to turn the murder of James Bulger "into a symbol of a Tory Britain in which, for all the efficiency that Thatcherism had achieved, the bonds of social and community well-being has been loosed, dangerously so" (Blair 2010, 57). As a device of contrast-creation, this redefinition of society succeeded, certainly if measured by the attention it brought to the then Shadow Home Secretary Blair. The appeal of a moralistic and behavioural account of social disintegration was established in political discourse. In 2001, it was deployed in the interpretation of unrest in Burnley, Oldham and Bradford and, later, found an expression in the concept of community cohesion.[104]

104 Tony Blair (2010, 204) remarks that he only realized towards the end of his premiership that society "hadn't [broken down] as a whole". This is a departure from the moralizing rhetoric that was the key feature of his political speech-making in the 1990s, beginning with when he framed the Bulger murder as "a symbol of Tory Britain" (Blair 2010, 57). His suggestion that this was "good politics" (Blair 2011) affirms the rhetorical value of disintegration, which is not to provide an account of society as it is, but to make effective and plausible projections. Despite his shift of emphasis ("bad policy") he continues to suggest, for example, that the riots of 2011, although not "symptomatic of society at large" are "a phenomenon of the late 20th century". He points to incivility and lack of self-control among marginal and disaffected populations, most of whom "are shaping up that way by the time they are in primary school or even in nursery". Their disaffection has to be addressed by means of behavioural and punitive interventions. Blair (2011) would have done so himself, he suggests, had there not been "a constant backdrop of opposition … on civil liberty grounds" and by Gordon Brown.

Finally, Gerhard Schröder's *Zivile Bürgergesellschaft* was part of a strategic attempt to locate his politics of welfare reform in a more encompassing social imagination. The ideas that there was a crisis of solidarity, that the German social collective had become apathetic and its social model sclerotic, had been widely accepted. In the discourse of Bürgergesellschaft it was furthermore established that the welfare state was partially or entirely to blame for this crisis and for the decline of the German social model, which was variously constructed and invoked. The language of Bürgergesellschaft has been deployed to establish this causality as common sense and to sketch out an alternative vision of social solidarity. Schröder's coalition government would draw on this notion of crisis in its introduction of a new system of welfare provision that put emphasis on activity and responsibility. Bürgergesellschaft in its civic, localist, and socio-economic dimensions provided a vehicle for such reforms.

The language of cohesion offers benefits in particular situations and allows for strategic positioning. The establishment of a contrast to 'the old' is characteristic of this positioning: old ways of doing things, of conceiving of social solidarity, social assistance, crime or urban unrest, are contrasted with novel and innovative approaches that allegedly make use of resources of social solidarity that had previously been ignored. Old dispositions and identities – inflexible, inactive, or ethno-religious for example – are contrasted with new, active and flexible subjectivities. Despite the dissimilar nature of the three cases and the respective concern with French welfare provision, German civicness and British minority communities, various versions of cohesion themes offered similar benefits by creating such contrasts and outmanoeuvring opponents that were thereby portrayed as proponents of old ways. This strategic thinking characterizes the formative stages of notions of cohesion, and is open to being analyzed with a focus on problem images or causal stories. However, despite the merits of this perspective, it does not sufficiently account for the appeal of cohesion and its sense of immediacy and urgency. For this we have to consider social imaginaries.

Social disintegration

Sociologists standing in the tradition of C. Wright Mills (1959) speak of the 'sociological imagination' that is needed to draw analytical connections across domains of social life. Analysts of politics have been less inclined to consider the role social imaginaries play in the political process. Where they have done so, they rarely consider

political rhetoric or social policy language. Pointing to this type of rhetoric, John Clarke (2007, 840) highlights a moment of projection and imagination and suggests that "[t]he 'body social' is the focus of 'mapping' projects – both in its own right and in terms of its potential relations to the 'body politic'." The concern with specific and identifiable issues and events is transposed to illustrate invisible social trajectories and to map out the 'body social' for how it may be amenable to political intervention. This characterizes the politics of cohesion, where the concern with empirically identifiable issues was creatively embellished, projected into the future and considered for its implications regarding social disintegration and cohesion.

The thesis has used the concept of social imaginaries as a tool for investigating such processes. The three perspectives introduced in Chapter 1 highlight the role of meaning and fantasy and point towards potentials for social critique. Charles Taylor (2004, 23) refers to the "ways people imagine their social existence, how they fit together with others, how things go on between them and their fellows, the expectations that are normally met, and the deeper normative notions and images that underlie these expectations". For Cornelius Castoriadis (1987, 143), social imaginaries are "the organizing patterns that are the conditions for the representability of everything that the society can give to itself". Ernesto Laclau, finally, points to how imaginary understandings of society become naturalized and "literalized" to the extent that they provide broad horizons of plausibility: "[t]he fascination accompanying the vision of a promised land or an ideal society stems directly from this perception or intuition of a fullness that cannot be granted by the reality of the present" (Laclau 1990, 62-3).

The appeal of cohesion does not rely on imaginations of utopian fullness or of some undistorted communal future life alone; nor is it exclusively apocalyptic and concerned with social collapse. The defining characteristic of the politics of cohesion is that it works across both imaginary registers. Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007, 147) elaborate on this coincidence. A "horrific dimension" of social disintegration connects to its utopian counterpoint and to a "fullness-to-come once a named or implied obstacle is overcome".[105] The urgency of cohesion relies on how the two are brought together: notions of social breakdown and disintegration connect to the promise of wholesome

105 This corresponds to Michel Foucault's (1997, 118) account of problematization as a work of thought, though it adds a specific concern for the operation of fantasy that is absent in Foucault's writings.

sociability. The promise is that where society falls apart, a sense of collective activity can make it whole again.

In the examination of three cases, the thesis has sought to identify the usage of these two dimensions in social cohesion politics. Regarding disintegration, New Labour engaged in the kind 'social mapping' that John Clarke refers to, as illustrated in the interpretation of the James Bulger murder and of the unrest in 2001. Segregation and self-segregation, in particular, supported the development of the community cohesion agenda. Events were often creatively embellished, dramatized and framed as metaphors for social malaise. The lawlessness of 'ethnic enclaves' became vivid, such as in representations of the attack on Walter Chamberlain in Oldham. The "no-go areas" that had allegedly emerged in various parts of the country served as an illustration of the character of those problematic populations whose subsequent violence could be seen as the confirmation of fundamental social pathologies. These pathologies which were then presented as the result of *laissez-faire* multiculturalism and the absence of shared values. The breakdown of Britain along ethnic lines, the "sleepwalking" into segregation that Trevor Phillips famously coined, the "nightmare" of "fully fledged ghettos" (Phillips 2005), or of Bradford in "the grip of fear" (Ouseley 2001, 1), provided a horizon for the dramatization of issues to which community cohesion constituted an allegedly appropriate response.

The imagination of *Bürgergesellschaft* mobilized anxieties of a different kind. Roman Herzog (1997) spoke of a "sense of paralysis". He characterized the German population as an oversaturated, irresponsible collective, dependent on welfare transfer and immobilized by vested interests. The idea of 'lagging behind' played a particular role in this imagination, since economic positioning had traditionally constituted a key expression of national pride in post-war Germany. On this imaginary canvass of status loss and social sclerosis, *Bürgergesellschaft* was introduced as an emotional appeal that promised to remedy the ills of collective inactivity.

Finally, when Chirac introduced *fracture sociale*, he was able to draw on the imagination of decline that was powerfully expressed in the commemoration of the *trente glorieuses.* This idea of decline was used to give meaning to a broad spectrum of social problems that were circumscribed by notions of social exclusion. Working with ambiguous interpretations of *exclusion sociale*, Chirac defined *fracture sociale* as a

psychological disposition, the loss of certainties, and a sense of moral crisis: the "relative and precarious calm of today is a mere result of the fear of tomorrow" (Chirac 1994, 47). Anxiety about the trajectory of French morals, a loss of certainty and compassion were part of the negative scenario of disintegration that Chirac invoked.

In different forms, themes of social disintegration were conspicuous in all three cases. Tony Blair (1998, 20) suggested that "societies risk falling apart in division, rancour and distrust". Social cohesion, he stated together with Gerhard Schröder (2003, 112), needed to be maintained "in the face of real and perceived uncertainty". With *fracture sociale*, Jacques Chirac invoked disintegration as a core motif of his electoral platform in 1995. Although we have been particularly interested in agenda-setting moments and in the rhetoric of prominent politicians, it is clear that their ideas of disintegration were mirrored and reinforced in public commentary and the media coverage of various critical events. It has not been the central concern of this study to dispute the urgency of the problems that these and other political deployments of cohesion circumscribe, or to argue for different, maybe more realistic, ways of imagining society and defining problems. The problems that Chirac, Schröder and Blair invoked were widely acknowledged and may have been experienced as matters of considerable urgency. They were, however, transposed, projected and 'mapped out' regarding their meaning for the condition of the 'body social', thereby suggesting that cumulative problems put fundamental aspects of social life into question. Social disintegration was introduced as an ever-present but equally ever-abstract risk. Its imagination became urgent in relation to a corresponding imagination that posited an ideal of social life, that of the cohesive society.

Social unity

A projection of wholesome and undistorted social life provided the counterpoint to social disintegration. For Britain, this was encompassed by the idea of vibrant communities where culture and religion, if of any importance, would be objects of mutual appreciation. Racism, the suggestion often seems to be, can be brushed aside by members of ethnic minority groups who in spite of their socio-economical marginality pull themselves up. The idea with community cohesion is that populations have to be united by a vision, subscribe to a sense of civic pride and have the "diversity knowledge", as Ouseley (2001, 33) put it, that would enable them to cope with adverse

circumstances. These ideas of positive behavioural potentials contrast with the portrayal of rioters as thuggish, community leaders as irresponsible and ethnic minorities as largely inward looking, inflexible and potentially violent. This contrast became visible in the media representations, the post-riot archive of reports and the political definition of cohesion. In the report of the Commission on Integration and Community Cohesion (2007) it was developed further: the report considered ethno-religious identities as problematic and contrasted these with more fluid dispositions, trans-national sensibilities and super-diversity. The suggestion was that community cohesion would require, or at least be much easier to attain, not just with new attitudes but with new identities.

The humane society invoked by Jacques Chirac drew on a similarly stark contrast. It suggested that the technocratic orientation of bureaucrats had made French society cold and inhumane. Despite his liberal policy record, Chirac reinvented himself as a representative of the moral centre. He defined his mission as that of rectifying a moral crisis and of providing a sense of psychological security. In agendas of *cohésion sociale* this humane vision of collective solidarity was spelt out and became a widely used element of Gaullist political rhetoric. The politics of *cohésion sociale* drew on the confluence between understandings of *exclusion sociale* as a moral crisis, a mental state and a humanitarian mission. It provided a vision of social cohesion that would be achieved in a society of compassion, humanity and social proximity.

The notion of Bürgergesellschaft, finally, provides examples of how a vision of a new community can play a role in political debate. The potentials of Bürgergesellschaft were constructed by drawing on German post-war achievements and were invoked in political marketing. The "foundational myth of the Federal Republic, national symbols and communal sentiments" (Speth 2003, 3) were drawn on to establish a contrast to the current crisis of collective social sclerosis. Against the sclerotic status quo of the German social model, extraordinary situations were used to illustrate aspirations of solidarity. The flooding of the River *Oder* or the post-war ethos of reconstruction provided for such illustrations where sustained collective efforts had made extraordinary achievements possible.

Similar to parallel notions in Britain and France, this positive vision of social unity remains elusive. The thesis has suggested that the trajectory of decline, if taken literally,

is as difficult to envision as the nature of the humane and cohesive society that is invoked. H.L.A. Hart (1967, 3, emphasis added) stated that social disintegration reflects "disguised tautologies … depending entirely on the *meaning* given to the expressions 'society,' 'existence,' or 'continued existence' of society". While the elusive, nostalgic or unrealistic nature of both imaginaries requires scrutiny, we have been more concerned with how this meaning came about. The rhetorical coincidence of disintegration and unity is a shared feature of the politics of cohesion. Likewise, all cohesion agendas investigated in this thesis aim at achieving a change of mentalities, to provide psychological certainty, and to instil social groups with a new spirit of activity. In order to become compelling, these objectives generally require the reiteration of notions of social disintegration and unity. The marketing campaigns of the *BürgerKonvent* in Germany exemplify how scenarios of disintegration and visions of social unity were reiterated and publicized to support the request for behavioural change and socio-economic reform. The conjunction of these themes has been characteristic of the politics of cohesion in all three cases.[106]

The active society

This study has endeavoured to illustrate how cohesion connects to the idea of the 'active society', made up of flexible and mobile subjects. Although the 'active society' is an idea with some pedigree and precedents in civil society thinking, the political turn towards activation that has been described here stands out as a novelty. It has become common to point towards inactivity, immobility, and inflexibility as pertinent causes of social problems and to propose policy measures of activation in response. Over the last three decades, activity has been introduced as a corrective towards various social shortcomings and as a core objective in the design of public policy.

106 This connection between cohesion and disintegration seems to reflect what social theorists have pointed to as the logic of risk (see also Fn. 1). For Ulrich Beck (1992, 20) a feature of modernity is that "risks and destruction ... must be reaffirmed over and over again". For Giddens (1998, 63), risk is "the energizing principle of a society that has broken away from tradition and nature." In both accounts, the management of risks is considered as the mode of governance that is characteristic of social modernity. Risk can be rhetorically invoked and politically deployed by governments to illustrate social trajectories and engage populations (see Diamond and Giddens 2005; Giddens 2007). Problematically, risk theory tends to elide that it is its own social projections that make 'energization' and activation appear as appropriate measures. Such projections, rather than the appropriateness of the label of 'risk' to natural forces beyond political control, require examination. This elision, of course, also extends to how social disintegration, fragmentation and complexity are treated as naturally given in the politics of cohesion.

While activation was originally conceived in relation to unemployment and social benefits, the politics of cohesion has been a vehicle for an expansion of ideas of social activity. Not only the workforce is open to be redefined with a view to its in/activity, but also various populations whose mobility, flexibility and behavioural outlook are seen to fall below certain standards. The imperative of socio-economic activity has been conjoined with ideals of civicness and social contact, among others, to support a perspective that conceives of active citizenship, mixing or occupational activity in similar terms. All of these emerged as concerns for government and as dispositions that needed to be fostered – or imposed where fostering does not work. Activation now informs various political strategies that are conceived where immobility has been introduced as a danger to social cohesion. It is the default prescription in the design of policies that target allegedly problematic populations.

The concern with activity, mobility and responsibility need not be met by a set of tangible policy measures and legislative efforts. However, this thesis has argued that even in instances in which it fails to give rise to such tangible changes, it has important political effects. This is the case because the consideration of social problems with the repertory of themes that cohesion provides renders alternative propositions implausible. In all three cases there was a displacement of alternatives when cohesion was introduced in opposition to competing perspectives. In Britain, alternative understandings of the causes of urban unrest and remedies that pointed towards socio-economic conditions were sidelined when community cohesion became a predominant perspective. Similarly, the concern with the structural disadvantages facing marginalized populations in the French *banlieues*, which had seemed compatible with earlier understandings of *exclusion sociale*, was out of touch with *cohésion sociale*. In Germany, the idea that collective civic and socio-economic activity needed to be heightened made alternatives, such as those concerned with institutional reform and socio-economic improvement, appear implausible. Alternative perspectives with historical precedent, as well as ideas that had previously been drawn on in the pursuit of progressive politics, became unavailable when social cohesion was introduced as explanation and remedy.

This type of long-term change, although it circumscribes the adoption of political agendas of cohesion, could not be systematically explored in the thesis. For France, Jacques Donzelot (2006, 3) suggests that *progrès sociale* had previously occupied the

place that, in the 1990s, *cohésion sociale* would assume. He points to this shift and argues that, with *cohésion sociale*, politics ceased to be considered "the guarantor or custodian of social progress", and was instead characterized as "that which incites civil society to produce cohesion in a competitive environment" (2006, 11). Similarly, progressive orientations have been in decline in Britain and Germany, and the politics of cohesion has played some role in their deterioration (Lister 2001; Worley 2005). Multiculturalism – the proposition that cultural pluralism is not a threat but a valuable resource – has been under attack for some time (Vertovec and Wessendorf 2010). Not just multicultural objectives, but also objectives connected to the ideal of racial equality have been curiously displaced in recent political discourse (Lentin and Titley 2011, 49-84). Surveying the turn towards toughened requirements of civic integration across Western Europe, Christian Joppke (2007, 25) concludes that the "main purpose of social inclusion is social cohesion – that is, order, not justice". Bürgergesellschaft, in turn, employed ideals of civic and democratic self-determination in the suggestion that an apathetic collective needed to do with less state support. It stood in more or less direct opposition to ideals of social solidarity embodied in the welfare state. While it would go too far to credit community cohesion, Bürgergesellschaft or *cohésion sociale* with such shifts, these initiatives clearly played a role in dislocating and diminishing progressive objectives.

Apart from displacing former political initiatives, the politics of cohesion also channelled new ones. *Immobilisme*, social sclerosis, being stuck in old ways of thinking, acting and being were defined as problematic. Introduced as a contrast, the politics of cohesion posited the need for a break. British post-immigration communities were said to have the potential to be vibrant. Their potential vibrancy could only be productively tapped into on the basis of reformed attitudes. Accordingly, community cohesion addressed sentiments and dispositions: "clear values that can govern behaviour" (Cantle 2001, para. 5.1.1). The notion of civic responsibility that was characteristic of the German Bürgergesellschaft, tapped into similar behavioural potentials. *Cohésion sociale* prioritized activity, such as in the labour market, and contrasted this with earlier understandings of what had caused social exclusion.

These orientations towards activity have been conceptualized in the social-science literature on governance. The contribution of activated individuals is either celebrated as empowerment or considered a necessity in the effective pursuit of governmental

objectives under difficult conditions. Social complexity and fragmentation – the social imaginary of 'new governance' – are seen to require a turn away from the state in the provision of public services. The idea with empowerment is that older governmental methods were imposing a stranglehold on creative potentials for self-governance. This appeal to freedom, creativity and self-empowered activity is entailed in all social cohesion agendas. The suggestion that cohesion can be achieved through the contribution of empowered citizens clearly encapsulates an ideal of democratic, self-governed activity. Activity is introduced in contrast to older social constraints and as a vision towards newly invigorated ideas of citizenship, participation and social engagement.

There are obvious limitations to understanding activation as an instantiation of ideals of liberty and autonomy. The creation of active subjects usually cannot be achieved without coercion. Where activity is not forthcoming, it becomes a requirement that informs measures with which individuals are targeted in order to activate them. Moreover, ideals of liberty are frequently defined and applied in a sweeping manner, notwithstanding differential potentials among individuals to live up to such ideals. These often seem to be derived from the particular circumstances of classes that already are civically engaged or socio-economically active in a particular way. Their conduct is generalized and informs new expectations that are put to people whose circumstances might make it difficult for them to aspire to the required standards. Mitchell Dean (2003, 134) thus rightly points to a tension: "'governance' conducted with the aim of 'activating' individuals comes to place obligations above freedom, and use[s] sanctions and coercive measures in the establishment of a particular form of life".[107]

The critical interest pursued in this investigation was to point out such biases. The rhetoric of empowerment rings hollow once the selectiveness of how problematic populations are defined and targeted is revealed. Distinctions between desirable and undesirable types of social activity leave little scope for choice, and ideals of social, civic or economic empowerment remain curiously incomplete. As their incompleteness shines through, the politics of cohesion becomes open to be contrasted with democratically defined purposes and perspectives on society. Considering such

107 The coincidence of different types of power, as is well known, is also what Michel Foucault (1991, 102) suggests. Rather than a displacement of sovereign and disciplinary power by governmentality and biopolitical power, he points to a "triangle" of techniques: "domination and discipline remain infrastructural to liberal governmentality" (Curtis 2002, 98).

alternatives raises rather daunting questions on the institution of new social imaginaries and a different, self-constituted type of politics. Although the thesis could not engage with these possibilities, it concludes with a tentative discussion of potentials beyond the politics of cohesion.

Beyond social cohesion?

This study has examined ideas of considerable fluidity. In all three cases the tenuousness of ideas and objectives made it difficult to consider the turn to cohesion as a reflection of long-term change. The thesis has not attempted to get to the ideological bottom of the politics of cohesion, as this would have deflected attention from the messy and fluctuating realities that have been investigated here. Despite this analytical choice, at this stage it may be appropriate to draw some tentative conclusions on how the turn to cohesion reflects changes beyond immediate agenda-setting and corresponds to broader concerns in critical social theory.

The political programmes that have borne out cohesion purported to disavow ideology. Of course, their post-ideological pretensions need to questioned, similarly to how claims towards an "end of ideology" (Bell 1960) have been called into doubt, for example those by Francis Fukuyama (2006). Even so, the disavowal of ideology is a shared element of the political rhetoric of social cohesion. Jacques Chirac's platform of 1995 and in subsequent years, Gerhard Schröder's *Neue Mitte* and Tony Blair's New Labour all claimed to 'value what works' (Finlayson 2003; Bevir 2005). Despite the fact that all drew on the rhetorical appeal of values and community, they also claimed to pursue 'evidence based policy'. Exponents of cohesion renounced older explanatory paradigms and political ideas as ideological and deluded. The turn towards behaviour, dispositions and social activity was presented as a matter of pragmatic concern and as a more humane orientation to public policy.

This ambiguity of pragmatic and moralistic orientations may be why it is difficult to establish the nature of the political project pursued with social cohesion. How cohesion connects to ideas of social progress, justice or equality – in terms of its content, but also in terms of the scope of its aspirations – is less than straightforward. It has already been suggested that the different cohesion agendas examined here experienced rather limited life-spans. Contrary to their grandiose ring, the *grands projets* of French public policy, Chirac's *relance sociale* of 2004 or Sarkozy's recent *grand débat* on French national

identity lasted for mere months before being abandoned and forgotten. In Germany and Britain, too, the political initiatives that have been investigated in previous chapters do not persist: neither community cohesion nor Bürgergesellschaft currently play a significant role in political debate. While notions of cohesion at the moment of their introduction seem profoundly influential in shaping policy, they were open to be revised, superseded or simply exhausted in a short amount of time. Cohesion does not appear to be a political objective that can sustain long-term commitments towards social change.

The fluidity of the politics of cohesion and its disavowal of ideology raise questions regarding its account of alternative futures. The coincidence of the turn to cohesion with the relative decline of progressive ideas in the formulation of political objectives begs questions to that effect. For example, Wendy Brown (2001, 23) suggests that the growth of moralizing political language, a phenomenon that would include references to cohesion, should be considered as a sign of "powerlessness" and the "symptom of a broken historical narrative to which we have not yet forged alternatives". Brown (2001, 20) argues that

> where there was once a millenarian, redemptive, or utopian project around which to organize the various strategies of the political present, such projects have splintered politically at the same time that they have been quite thoroughly discredited.

The changing political role of social utopia has been of interest for some time. Jürgen Habermas, as referred to before, argues that with the declining significance and increasing precariousness of the salaried, industrial workforce, the promise of social improvement through the mechanisms of the welfare state has become hollow. Today, we see "the disappearance of the utopian contents of the laboring society" (1989, 68).[108]

Diagnoses of the decline of political utopia contain interesting ambiguities. On the one hand, many seem to celebrate its demise for how it opens up the space for the pragmatic pursuit of political objectives, which are considered to be guided by 'values', not utopia.[109] A different perspective on contemporary politics, on the other hand, points to

108 For Habermas, communication can be the paradigm to provide new reassurances and re-infuse utopia into society. More recently, he points to religion as a resource that may complement the normative foundations of the democratic-constitutional state and prevent their atrophy (Habermas 2005).

109 There is, of course, also a more philosophical rejection of utopia and progress (eg., Gray 2008; Scruton 2010, 62-79).

the remaining role of utopia, such as of imaginaries of the good society that continue to underpin the formulation of objectives, though they might be concealed. Ruth Levitas (2010a) points to utopia as an "imagination of society and ourselves [that] expands the range of possibilities" (Levitas 2010b, 546); she acknowledges, as do others, that the *overt* formulation of such alternatives has not been a strong point of recent mainstream politics.

Critical perspectives

The projection of alternative social imaginaries – Cornelius Castoriadis' (1987) 'imaginary institution of society' or the 'imaginary reconstitution of society' that Levitas (2005) speaks of – poses both conceptual and practical challenges. They nonetheless may be important to consider in relation to the politics of cohesion. Individuals that can be activated, it has been suggested, need to be located on an imaginary social map. Retracing the politics of cohesion, the thesis has examined how visions of society were conceived, projected and mapped out in different national contexts. In how it has examined these projections, the thesis has pursued concerns that mirror issues raised in critical social theory, specifically in contributions that examine political dimensions of the construction of social meaning. A concern for Ernesto Laclau (1990; 1996), Chantal Mouffe (1993; 2000), Jacques Rancière (1995; 2006) and Cornelius Castoriadis (1987) is how social categories that are experienced as fixed and beyond revision can be challenged. This challenge, they suggest, can be the starting point, as much as it is the prerequisite, for reinvigorated democracy. Their account of utopia is one where social meaning is created rather than imposed.

But what is the potential for this approach to inform a project of political change? State activity, it could be argued, is always accompanied by social projections, definitions of social problems and accounts of alternative futures that are institutionally determined. In his influential work on welfare politics, Hugh Heclo (1974, 305) points to the role that fantasy invariably plays in the formulation of political objectives: "Politics finds its sources not only in power but also in uncertainty – men collectively wondering what to do. […] Policy-making is a form of collective puzzlement on society's behalf". From a somewhat more post-modernist perspective, it is suggested that the multiplicity of social phenomena and indeterminate understandings of society require efforts to 'fix' meaning (Laclau and Mouffe 2001, 96), to offer intelligible accounts of society, its problems and

trajectories. The appeal to "a promised land or an ideal society" (Laclau 1990, 63) is characteristic of public policy initiatives that speak to and seek to mobilize constituencies.

Judith Butler, too, has pointed to the role of fantasy in how 'the state' charts out society in order for complex phenomena to become intelligible. Butler (2002, 28) argues that

> the appeal to the state is at once an appeal to a fantasy already institutionalized by the state and a leavetaking from existing social complexity in the hope of becoming 'socially coherent' at last. What this means as well is that there is a site to which we can turn, understood as the state, that will finally render us coherent, a turn that commits us to the fantasy of state power.

Butler suggests that the projection of social meaning – the definition of social problems or of the 'cohesive society' – reflects a human need for intelligible categories and authoritative definitions, which are put forward in response to requests for clarity and coherence. Given the indeterminacy of society, 'the state' is expected to engage in its ordering.

The implications of this and other critical perspectives for how to go beyond the politics of cohesion are not straightforward. Social theorists, including Butler and Laclau, often seem better placed to speak from a level of generality, such as about the 'fantasy of state power', than to pursue the minutiae of rhetoric and interpretations that are characteristic of social policy-making. For example, when Butler refers to 'the state' as that which responds to expectations for intelligibility, she invokes a clumsy concept. While 'the state' may codify and authorize particular social understandings, these understandings emerge from within the competition of various state and non-state actors. In focusing on the interpretive work carried out by such actors, the thesis has sought to show that the politics of cohesion – for its ordering and 'fixing' of society – did not occur in response to natural conditions or exogenous expectations. Social imaginaries were defined and proposed in the context of competitive pressures. Even when we acknowledge that there is a need for society to be rendered intelligible (by 'the state', institutions or politicians), this does little to clarify what types of social imaginaries emerge at particular points in time. Critical social theory, while it speaks to concerns about the imaginary work that policy-making entails, needs to be grounded in an engaged exploration of political realities, such as the changing ways and contexts in which social unity is considered to be at risk.

Such changes could only be of limited concern here. There are, of course, different ways of conceiving of social unity and diverse beliefs about what holds society together. Following the loose categorization that we have introduced in the discussion of Durkheim's perspective in introduction and first chapter, social cohesion can be considered as an integrationist conception of social unity that does not require substantive homogeneity. It is compatible with liberal-democratic regimes, where only a limited consensus needs to exist, and difference and disagreement are not considered inimical to social unity. Different from the unity envisaged by the *anti-Dreyfusards* or their contemporary exponents, integrationism is predicated on dispositions, beliefs, values and attitudes that are considered to be accessible to all.

In reality such dispositions are never completely shared, while the value consensus that sustains liberal democratic regimes often seems at risk of being overstated (see Unger 1975; Bader 2001). The extent of the minimalist consensus that may be required for citizens to collaborate and coexist is not our concern here, but it is clear that this agreement does not stand in the way of even fundamental revisions. Social values may reflect cultural horizons and be revised in the course of cross-cultural engagement (see for example Parekh 2008). Understandings of 'the good life' or 'the good society' are historically dependent, as is evident when older social definitions, some of which may have previously been considered foundational for social unity, were superseded. Conceptions of family life, sexual identities, and gender divisions, for example, have repeatedly been challenged and revised in response to claims that were democratically articulated. Their revision coincides with new propositions on what principles, ideas and attitudes may account not just for social stability, but for the kind of society that is deemed desirable. While such potentials for contestation and social self-definition are, of course, often unrealized, they point to a democratic ideal, maybe even a democratic utopia. The terms of social integration are not beyond revision, society can be re-imagined and re-constituted, and this endeavour can be a starting point for democracy. This does not need to amount to a wholesale rejection of integrationist ideas, such as of social integration through activity, and how they inform current conceptions of social unity. It merely indicates an entry point for the democratic revision of the terms of social integration.

Biases of integration

Integrationist conceptions of social unity contrast with understandings that are grounded in cultural, religious, ethnic or racial homogeneity. In contemporary European politics these orientations seem to mark two poles in the debate about the integration of ethnic minorities and other populations whose presence is seen to pose a challenge to social harmony. In Germany, *Leitkultur* contrasts with conceptions of civic belonging. While Britishness is often defined in terms of inclusive, albeit vague, values, Englishness seems more difficult to separate from ethnic connotations but also offers a more tangible identity for many. In response to the electoral success of the *Front National*, the French centre-right is increasingly concerned to define a culturally thick horizon of Frenchness (Besson 2009; Sarkozy 2009). Integrationist and substantialist or essentialist conceptions of social belonging are conspicuous, and usually not perfectly separated in these country contexts.

The inclusivity of integrationist ideals is not consistently mirrored in the inclusive practice of liberal democratic regimes. In fact, such ideals rarely seem undiluted. Foundational values, human rights for example, are not infrequently presented not just as horizons to which everybody has equal access, but as culturally grounded and particularly accessible to ethno-cultural insiders. *Leitkultur*, understood as a summary statement of value commitments, may reflect what Christian Joppke (2008) has coined as the 'paradox of universalism' in how civic identities are currently defined across Western Europe.[110] In practice, however, *Leitkultur* is delineated as 'Judeo-Christian' and defined so as to exclude significant ethno-religious minority groups, which are symbolically written out of this horizon of values.

Overlaps between essentialism and integrationism are similarly evident outside of the domain of immigrant integration. The 'feral underclasses' that were widely cited in recent public commentary in Britain are constructed with a similar ambiguity (Clarke 2011; Henley 2011). The problematic nature of populations is traced to an account of cultural otherness – to either 'chav', 'gang' or even 'black culture' (Jones 2011a;

110 Joppke suggests that where, in Western Europe, national identities are currently supposed to be strengthened or made more tangible, their content is usually defined by drawing on liberal-universalist ideas (equality, fairness, etc.). These are widely shared beyond national context and as such, Joppke suggests, cannot provide for the flavour of national specificity that is supposed to distinguish national identities (Joppke 2008; 2010)

2011b). Portrayals of the populations from which the rioters of August 2011 were seen to have emerged – similar to representations of the *émeutes* of November 2005 – drew attention to irresponsible parents, single mothers and lax morals. Such interpretations coincided with the stigmatisation of populations as essentially different that allowed mainstream observers to interpret their violence as a manifestation of "unleashed human evil" (Hitchens 2011).

Similar ambiguities apply where activity is considered as a mode of social integration. There are good reasons to be critical of how particular expectations of activity were introduced and attitudes defined that corresponded to such expectations. The definition of such requirements, and how these were placed on the doorsteps of particular social groups, highlights a selectivity in the politics of cohesion that is evident in all three instances that have been examined. Social spaces were conceived where individuals, no matter what their respective capacities or resources, were asked to comply with pre-established understandings of liberty, flexibility and mobility.

Perpetually activated individuals, captured in a network of measures and initiatives intended to facilitate responsible conduct, find themselves in situations where they are pushed towards undefined ideals. Standards of sociability are imposed and deviance, defined as irresponsible, unsociable, or anti-social conduct, is penalized. Particularly those that are considered problematic, i.e. welfare recipients, ethnic minorities, inhabitants of sink estates, or the unemployed, are blamed for their alleged inactivity and face the brunt of pressures towards activity. That disadvantaged social groups are targeted, that it is *their* immobility that is problematized, needs to be pointed out with recourse to a reinvigorated language of unfairness and injustice. The politics of cohesion and its account of activation reflect a hierarchy of character types that requires scrutiny (Boltanski 2011). That privileged groups, such as those that are living in the affluent zones of Britain, Germany and France, are not called up to evince a particular 'cohesiveness' points to a selectiveness that ought to be critically exposed.

But the politics of cohesion needs to be subjected to a second type of critique, too. The idea of perpetual activity creates pressures for everybody, even for advantaged populations that are called up to make their life-stories fit the shape of a managerial project. The social goods that were seen to require movement and flexibility did not, in the three cases that have been studied here, emerge as a result of democratic concern or

collective agency. How such social imaginaries can be democratized, or at least be democratically amended, is a question that goes to the heart of the political process in liberal democracies. There is clearly a desire for social objectives of current regimes to be newly debated and reconsidered, exemplarily shown by *¡Democracia Real YA!* in Spain, social justice protests in Israel or student protests in Britain. The relative poverty of the social imaginary that corresponds to the politics of austerity is being challenged, and this – one would hope – may be the beginning of a reinfusion of social meaning that is different from the politics of cohesion.

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